健速
Takehaya
13

健速 たけはや

「あの日々をもういちど」（HJ文庫）で作家デビュー。細々とツイッターをやっています。暇のある方は『健速』か『@Takehaya_info』で検索してみてください。

ポコ

兵庫出身のイラストレーター。
好物はやきそば。最近は近所の中華料理屋の海鮮かた焼きそばにハマり中。

カバーイラスト／ポコ　装丁／渡辺宏一

六畳間の侵略者!?

健速
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た03-02-15

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HOBBY JAPAN

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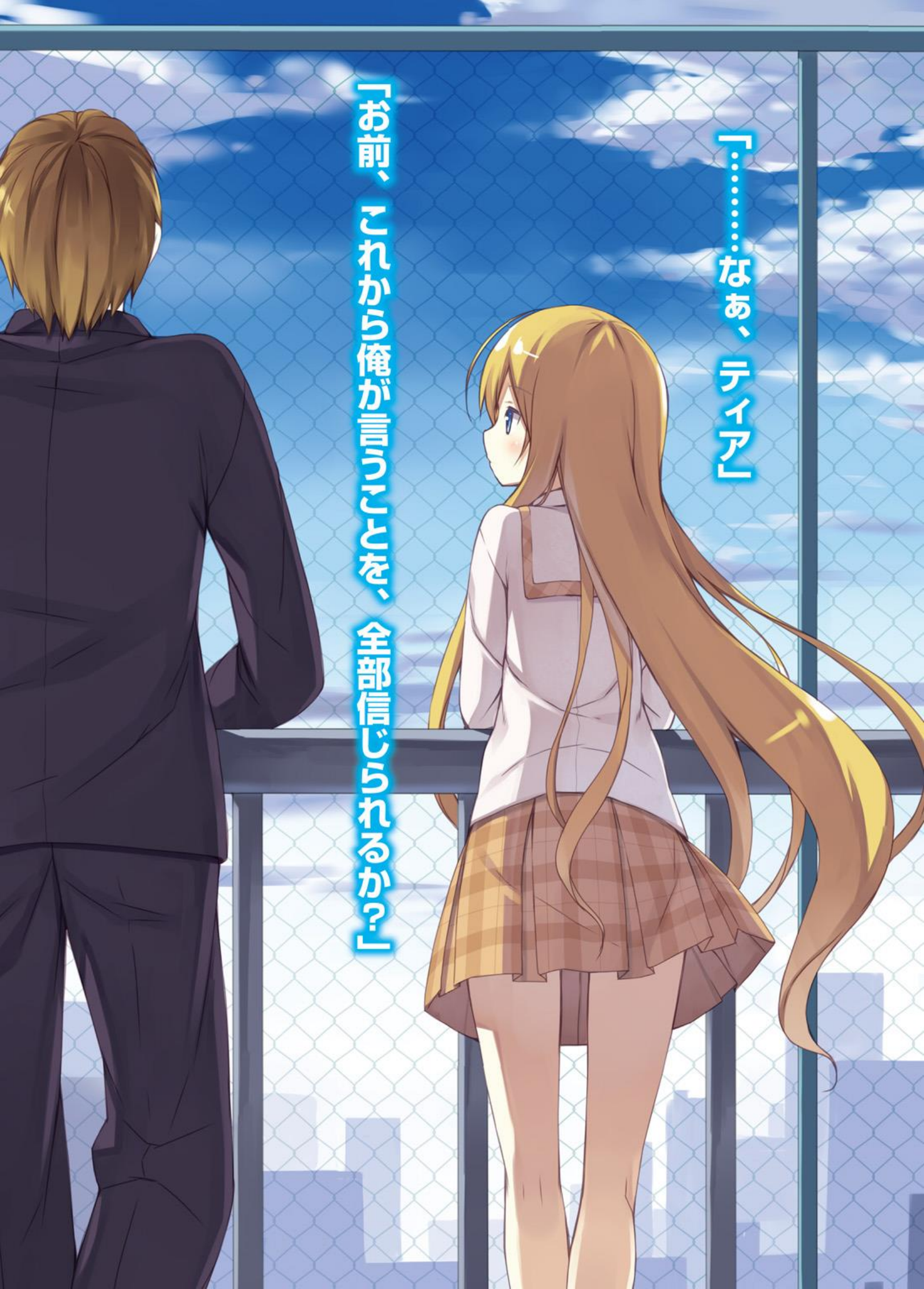
自らの母、神聖フォルトーゼ銀河帝国皇帝エルファリアが病に倒れたという緊急連絡を受けたティアは、母国の政情も鑑みてころな荘一〇六号室の侵略を断念、帰国を決意する。六畳間の面々からのプレゼントを手に、ティアとルースは後ろ髪を引かれながらも母国へ向かうが――それは反皇帝派が仕掛けた罠だった！
今巻の孝太郎もちょー大活躍だぜ!!

HOBBY JAPAN

INVADERS
of the ROKUJYOMA!?
六畳間の侵略者!? 13

INVADERS of the ROKUJYOMA!?

今迫る、ころな荘
最大の危機!!!


「……なぁ、ティア」
「お前、これから俺が言うことを、全部信じられるか？」

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Homecoming

Part 1

April 25, Sunday

Even on Sundays, the mornings are early in room 106. The reason for that is Koutarou and Ruth's daily morning training. While everyone else are still sleeping, they would go out with just the two of them. That was a scenery that had been repeated these past several months.

But Ruth didn't appear today. And if she didn't appear, there was no one to wake Koutarou up. As a result, Koutarou was still lying down on the floor, leaning on one of the walls in the room.

The sound of unreserved footsteps could be heard passing by Koutarou. And the owner of those footsteps sat down in front of the TV and used the remote to turn it on. Because there were a lot of anime being aired on Sunday mornings, this was an important time for this anime loving person.

“…Ah, Sanae-chan, if you run around like that Satomi-san will wake up!”

There was a second person with the first, and the second scolded the first. This second person worried that the sound of loud footsteps might wake up Koutarou.

“It's okay if he wakes up.”

“If he wakes up, he'll make me study!”

“It's okay if you study. You're going to study in the university right?”

“If I'm studying I can't watch TV!”

“It's okay, you can just record it. We live in a convenient era.”

“But I want to watch it now!”

The second person sat down next to the first and started watching the TV. Fortunately, not even this ruckus was enough to wake Koutarou. As the anime started airing, the two started talking less and less, and in the end, they didn't wake Koutarou up.

“…Satomi-kun, sleeping in a place like this. Fufu.”

“That's dangerous Aika-san. If you get too close to Satomi-kun, you'll go through an awful experience.”

Next, another two people appeared in the small room. These two spoke to each other in a friendly tone as they looked at Koutarou who was sleeping by the wall. Having spoken to each other all night yesterday, they had gotten closer.

“Kasagi-san, what do you mean by that?”

“Not only does Satomi-kun sleep in odd positions, but he also tends to hug onto things half-asleep. When Yurika tried to wake him up, he used wrestling techniques on her, and Ruth was even mistaken for a tree full of beetles.”

“Fufufu, that's just like him.”

“I told you it's dangerous.”

“…I want an experience that friends can have too.”

“You sure are eccentric, Aika-san…”

“This is the first time I've lived with real nice people…”

“It's very fun, every day is like an excursion.”

Homecoming

“Ahaha…”

Because neither of the two had a family, they could sympathize with each other. Though they didn't look like it on the surface, deep down inside they were very similar. Having understood that about each other after their long talk yesterday, they now had a very friendly atmosphere around them.

“We should just wake him up. The room is already small and he's stretching out so much…”

“Clan-san, what did you do when you were travelling with Satomi-kun?”

“Lifting him up a little and then dropping him was effective. Fortunately, it was easy because that armor could be remote controlled.”

Another two people appeared, and compared to the others already in the room, these two had a much calmer impression to them.

“…I see, I'll keep that in mind.”

“Harumi, that would be hard for you since you don't have any strength, wait, you should just use magic instead.”

“I still don't feel like I'm really a magician…”

One of these two had a weak constitution and would have a physical examination this morning. The other had access to more advanced medical equipment and was able to treat the other much more efficiently than modern medicine could. To the one with weak constitution, it was very reassuring to have the other as a friend. The two had chosen this room as their meeting place before that examination.

“Has everyone gathered?”

There was one more. This person peeked out from the kitchen in the hallway right next to the inner room. This person was often in charge of most of the housework of room 106 on her own. And even now she was wearing a hairnet and preparing today's breakfast.

Homecoming

Homecoming

“Theia-chan and Ruth-chan aren't here yet.”

“Hmm…”

“Kiriha, what's for breakfast today?”

“Salmon, miso soup and boiled spinach.”

“Alright! A jackpot breakfast!”

“Uhm, what should we do about Satomi-san?”

“It's about time to wake him up.”

“Eeeeeeeeeeehhhh~~~”

“What's with that face?”

“Whenever Satomi-kun wakes up, he forces Nijino-san to study, so she doesn't want to wake him.”

“Quit being so picky, Nijino Yurika.”

“Maki-chan, you can only say that because you don't know what it's like!”

Apart from Koutarou, there were seven others in the room.

Sanae, Yurika, Maki, Shizuka, Clan, Harumi and Kiriha.

Without exception, all of the ones around Koutarou were girls of age. During the past year, they had all came to this room for different reasons. And as a result, they accepted each other and formed a tight bond of camaraderie.

Besides Koutarou and the girls, they had two more comrades. After washing his face in the bathroom, Koutarou noticed that neither of those two were in the room.

“Huh? Where's Theia and Ruth-san?”

Theia was full of pride and had golden hair that stood out from a distance.

Ruth was serious and honest, and because of that she was easily trusted.

They were a princess and her servant knight that had come from the other side of the universe. Normally, it wouldn't be strange to see the two of them in the room by this hour, but neither of them were here.

“…Actually, last night they ran into a little trouble, and are now busy trying to deal with it.”

Kiriha was the one to answer Koutarou's question. She continued her explanation as she filled a bowl with rice.

“They said they'd drop in during the morning, so they should be here soon.”

“What kind of trouble?”

“The situation is complicated, so it's better if you hear it from them directly. Just wait a moment, Satomi Koutarou…”

“I see…”

Koutarou showed a complex expression, deep in thought, as he sat down on his usual spot. He then looked at the gate connecting the room to the spaceship the Blue Knight. Noticing that Koutarou had an expression more serious than normal, Harumi who was sitting on the other side of the table called out to him.

“Are you worried about Theiamillis-san?”

Homecoming

“In terms of worry, I'm worried about everyone. The situation is more complex than we thought.”

Yurika's and Kiriha's enemies were secretly working together. And because of that, everyone was in danger, and there was an endless cause for concern for Koutarou.

“But since I can't see Theia and Ruth like I can with you… I am a little anxious.”

Koutarou couldn't do anything for someone who he couldn't see, so he was feeling impatient.

“There's no need to worry that much, Satomi-kun.”

“Sakuraba-senpai…”

“If this was about something more important where Theiamillis-san's life was at stake, Kiriha-san would have woken you up much sooner.”

“That's… true.”

Koutarou nodded at what Harumi was saying and looked at Kiriha. Kiriha responded by looking back at him and smile.

Which means she has some difficult decision she has to make on her own…

If Theia really was in danger, Kiriha wouldn't be this carefree. That said, if it was something simple, Kiriha would have explained it herself. And since neither of that had happened, Theia can't have been in danger, but she should be in a situation where she had to make a difficult decision.

“Nothing will start from you worrying, let's eat first!”

As Sanae said that, she clung onto Koutarou's back like normal. Breakfast was a source for energy, and Sanae wanted to wait for Theia full of energy.

“…You have a point. Alright, let's eat.”

“Yeah!”

Thanks to Sanae, Koutarou was able to feel a little better. The atmosphere in the room softened up. Theia and Ruth not being here was something everyone was worried about.

Part 2

Theia and Ruth appeared in room 106 just as Koutarou and the others had finished with breakfast. The two of them looked tired, and their expressions were dark and gloomy.

“…Good, you're all here.”

Just as she turned up, Theia started speaking about something serious. Ruth was standing behind her, watching. Seeing the two like that, Koutarou could vaguely understand the severity of the trouble they were having.

“Everyone, there is something I'd like to say. May I have some of your time?”

As Theia said that, the girls who were busy with different things all gathered around the tea table without complaining. After waiting for everyone to sit down by the tea table, Theia slightly lowered her head.

“Thank you, I appreciate it.”

“Theia, what happened?”

As Koutarou urged Theia to continue, their eyes met. And after looking at Koutarou for a while, Theia slowly continued speaking while she started to tear up.

“…Actually, it seems like my mother fell ill in Forthorthe.”

“Your mother, Elle… uhm, you mean the current empress, her majesty Elfaria?”

Koutarou pulled that name out of his memory and asked Theia. In return, Theia nodded solemnly.

“Yes. My mother's body is not as sturdy as mine. It seems that she was so busy with her official duties that she fell ill.”

“Oh yeah, the current Forthorthe is…”

Koutarou wasn't very knowledgeable about the state of the present day Forthorthe, but he remembered what Theia and Clan had mentioned. Theia's mother, Elfaria, was a pacifist that wished to disarm the military. As a result, her relationship with the army deteriorated and any reforms had reached a standstill. Since Elfaria would have to suppress the military's extreme backlash, Koutarou could easily imagine her becoming very busy with her official duty. And her body had been unable to deal with all the hard work she was forced to do.

“That's why… though I am very reluctant to do this…”

Theia paused for a moment to look at everyone gathered around the tea table before finally continuing.

“…I am thinking of returning to Forthorthe. And I will… give up on the rights to the throne.”

When Theia spoke those words, the atmosphere in room 106 froze.

Homecoming

Part 3

Theia had come to room 106 in order to obtain the rights to succeed the imperial throne. And for Theia to do that, she needed to seize control of Corona House's room 106. That was why she had come here and met with Koutarou and the others. She was determined that she wouldn't return to Forthorthe until she had put room 106 under her rule.

But she couldn't say that now with her mother suddenly falling ill. Theia's real reason for wanting the rights to the throne was so that she could strengthen her own influence and be of help to her mother who was in a tough position. That's why Theia had no other option but to return to Forthorthe and nurse her mother. She wasn't childish enough to give up on her mother and find happiness for herself.

That's why Theia had decided to leave Earth and return home. She still hadn't achieved her trial, but with this being a sudden illness, she was pressed for time. If she waited until her trial was complete, things might develop in an irreversible direction. Though Theia was reluctant, this was something she had to do.

If she was to leave Earth, there were a lot of things that Theia had to do, which was why she hadn't slept at all since last night. And even as the sun rose on the new day, Theia was still preparing for her journey home.

“I didn't think there would be much… but looking at it now, there is a lot to do.”

“That is just how much we have come into contact with the people of this planet.”

“Yes…”

A leave of absence had to be submitted to Kitsushouharukaze high school, farewells had to be said to close acquaintances, and finally, she had to pack up for her return to Forthorthe.

Theia was carefully putting all of her luggage away in plastic containers.

The bag she used when going to school. The notebooks she had written down in during class. The uniform she had gotten. The swimsuit she wore to the beach last year. The books and CDs she bought. The game console and games she would stay up at night to play.

She had things in both room 106 and in her own private room on the Blue Knight. All of it were precious things full of memories. And as she touched them, she remembered back when they had been used. They weren't just simple tools, but like Ruth had said, they were precious memorabilia that served as proof of her growth on this planet.

“It's hard to leave this planet behind…”

“Yes…”

When she had first come here, Theia wanted to clear her trial as quickly as possible and return to her mother. She only thought of the people here as neanderthals and had no intention of staying for long. But now, she wanted to stay on this planet for as long as she could. And that was because she had begun thinking of the people of this planet as irreplaceable.

Theia stopped arranging her luggage and looked towards a wall. There, a crimson tulip, carefully preserved, decorated the wall. That flower was the most valuable treasure Theia had gotten on this planet. Seeing Theia like that, Ruth stopped as well and called out to her.

“…Is your number one regret Satomi-san?”

There was another crimson tulip decorating Ruth's room. It was a present given to her by the same person.

“Yes. I won't be able to fulfill my promise of always being with him.”

Homecoming

In the past, Theia and Ruth had decided to live together with the man who gave them their tulips. But the unexpected situation with Theia's mother caused them to go back on that decision. The man who had given them their tulips couldn't leave room 106 in his current situation, and Theia still had to return to her mother no matter what. It was a fate that couldn't be avoided.

“I wonder if our determination was just at this level…”

“Your highness…”

It was a life that they had seriously chosen. But even then, it had easily ended. Theia was unbearably saddened and felt like her love was insufficient. Ruth felt the same way. She had made the same serious choice as Theia.

“I'm sorry Koutarou… Forgive me…”

Theia instinctively spoke out the name of the person who had given her that tulip. Because of Theia's bitter decision, her silent voice was trembling.

“Theia, do you have moment?”

That was when a visitor appeared in front of Theia's room.

Part 4

Koutarou had been given the authority to operate all of the functions available in the spaceship, the Blue Knight. This included permission to enter the special residential area that normally only royalty could enter. Koutarou had used that authority to visit Theia and Ruth.

“Wait for a moment.”

Koutarou could hear Theia's voice coming out from the intercom placed by the door to the room. He was standing in front of Theia's room, waiting for the door to be opened. Meanwhile, he was checking his outfit one final time. Since this was an important moment, he couldn't afford to do anything rude.

Thinking about it, this might be the first time I've come to meet princess Theiamillis…

In the past, Koutarou had come to meet his friend, Theia, but he had never come to visit princess Theiamillis. This might have been the first time he treated her like a proper princess. As a result, he was feeling a little nervous.

“…Go ahead.”

The door started sliding to the side as Theia spoke out. Appearing from the other side was a girl with golden hair, wearing a dress. Seeing her appearance, Koutarou naturally looked down and kneeled.

“…It is an honor to meet you, princess Theiamillis. I am Satomi Koutarou, a wandering knight without a lord.”

Koutarou spoke something similar to a line he had practiced for the play. As a result, it naturally flowed out from his mouth.

“Koutarou…?”

“I came here today to make a request of her highness. I seek your permission to enter the room.”

“What are you…”

Facing Koutarou who had a completely different atmosphere to him, Theia was puzzled. That's why she simply stood staring at him without permitting him to enter.

“Your highness, Satomi Koutarou-sama is seeking permission to enter.”

Sensing that Koutarou had an idea in mind, Ruth urged Theia ahead on his behalf.

“Ah, yes… I permit it. You may enter.”

That was when Theia finally permitted Koutarou access.

“I am honored. Then excuse me.”

Still a little nervous, Koutarou entered Theia's room. Since Theia didn't know what Koutarou was thinking, she felt a similar nervosity. The two faced each other as if this was the first time they had met.

“Allow me to give you my greetings once more. I am Satomi Koutarou, a wandering knight without a lord.”

Koutarou walked up to Theia, kneeled and introduced himself once more.

“W-What business do you have? Let me hear it.”

When answering, Theia had a somewhat shrill voice. She was still confused. Koutarou's way of speaking and why his attitude was completely different from the ordinary. His clothes were

normal; he was wearing his school uniform. But he had buttoned up even the top bottom of his shirt, and his collar was straightened. He even wore his school cap that he normally never wore.

Your highness… Master…

Ruth gently watched over Theia, who was still confused, and Koutarou, who had a very serious atmosphere around him. She felt like something special was happening.

“I came here today to make a request of her highness.”

Koutarou was still looking down and continued to speak. Seeing him like that, Theia started feeling more and more uneasy. She started wondering if the person in front of her was really Koutarou.

“Which is…?”

Theia urged Koutarou on, whilst feeling an unbelievable unease. Koutarou responded by looking up, straight into Theia's eyes.

Ah…

In that moment, Theia's anxiety vanished without a trace and she returned to her usual self. Koutarou was smiling. It was his normal smile that Theia and Ruth loved.

“My skills are average, and I am a mere country knight with a domain six tatami mats large.”

Koutarou pulled out a large sheet of paper and placed it on top of a nearby container.

This is?!

Theia's eyes opened wide. That sheet was the scoreboard that had been used to compete for rulership of the room. On it, Koutarou's and the four girl's names were written down, alongside with their scores. However, there were only two names with points on it now, Theia and Koutarou.

Theia had 218 points, just like she recalled.

However, Koutarou had 862 points. Everyone else's points were gone. For some reason, all of the points apart from Theia's were now with Koutarou.

“Princess Theiamillis, please make me one of your highness's vassals.”

“Eh…?”

Theia's brain froze when she heard those unexpected words. She couldn't understand the meaning of what she had been told.

“Congratulations, your highness!”

Instead, Ruth shouted out with a joyous expression. Having watched from the sides, she understood what Koutarou was saying.

If Theia accepted Koutarou's request, Koutarou would become her vassal in both name and reality. On top of that, all of the points would become Theia's. Meaning, she would gain ownership of the room. And that could only mean one thing.

“Rejoice, your trial is complete! With this, you will have earned the rights to the imperial throne!”

“The rights… to the throne…?”

It meant that Theia had cleared the trial she had been given, that she had acquired the rights to the imperial throne.

“Yes! Your highness, you have splendidly overcome the trial and fulfilled your obligation as royalty!”

Homecoming

“I, acquired… the rights to the throne…?”

Theia looked at Ruth with a blank look of surprise. But even as she looked at Ruth's smile, it didn't feel real to her. Looking for a clear answer, Theia looked back towards Koutarou.

“Koutarou, is what Ruth is saying true? Have I completed my trial?”

“Not yet. I have still not heard your highness's answer.”

“My answer?”

“Your highness, give me your answer please. Will you accept me as your vassal?”

“Ah…”

Sensing Koutarou's calming tone and gentle glance, Theia gradually began to understand the situation.

Koutarou has accepted me as his master…

Her understanding gradually turned into a great joy. Theia's heart was beating as quickly as the drums of a rock band. She suppressed her feelings of rushing ahead and called out to Koutarou.

“…S-Satomi Koutarou.”

Theia was desperately trying to calm herself down. However, she stuttered and her voice faltered. Her vision turned blurry with the tears filling her eyes. There was no way she could stay calm when this time had finally come.

Homecoming

“Yes.”

Koutarou kept his head facing down as a sign of subordination. Seeing that, Theia made her declaration.

“I will accept you as my knight, and give you the title of Theiamillis's Blue Knight.”

“…I will respectfully accept, my princess…”

Thus the pledge between master and servant was made.

Homecoming

Part 5

Learning that Theia would be returning home, the first thing Koutarou worried about was her rights to the throne. With her mother ill, the chances of Theia returning to Earth any time soon were extremely low. And if that happened, Theia's trial would fail, and she would lose her rights to the throne forever.

So Koutarou pleaded with all of the other invaders. He pleaded with them to trust in him and Theia, and to temporarily entrust him with all of the points. The girls all accepted. Koutarou then became Theia's vassal. With this, Theia became the rightful ruler of room 106 and had completed her trial.

However, with the threat of the radical faction and the evil magical girls, room 106 couldn't be left in Theia's sole rule. That was why the next process was needed.

Corona House room 106 would be appointed as the Mastir family's Satomi territory, and Koutarou would be its lord. And once Theia had returned to Forthorthe, Koutarou would return the points he had borrowed from the girls, solving both problems.

By doing that, Theia would complete her trial and the situation would return to normal. It was a somewhat forced method, but there should be no problems with the procedure. This was a tricky solution made available thanks to the trust between Koutarou and the invaders. Normally, Theia wouldn't accept this kind of method, but in her current situation, this was the only solution.

Immediately after making their pledge, Theia rushed towards Koutarou and threw herself at him.

“Koutarou!”

“Woah?!”

He had never imagined that she would jump at him at full speed. Still kneeling, Koutarou hurriedly tried to catch her. Theia was convinced that he would. Her jump was fast and hard, and Koutarou had no other choice but to receive her.

“You said you'd become my vassal, Koutarou! I heard it with my very own ears! You won't get away with taking it back now!”

Her intense expression of joy was wet from her tears as she held onto Koutarou's head with both arms. She was like a child that had gotten a stuffed animal she always wanted, and she hugged Koutarou as hard as she could in an attempt to shrink the distance between them as much as possible.

“I am your master! No matter how far we may be apart, I am your sole master now!”

“H-Hey, Theia… you've got the order mixed up. What about the sword?!”

In Forthorthe, it was tradition to touch the left and right shoulder of the knighted person with the flat of a sword whilst bestowing them their title. But Theia had omitted that and was now hugging Koutarou instead.

“It's fine! I've already done that half a year ago! Your answer is what's half a year late!”

“What?”

“Fufufu, actually, Satomi-sama, the ceremony of bestowal was already done half a year ago after your fight with Clan-sama. Of course, you were asleep at the time…”

Ruth explained to the confused Koutarou, with a smile.

Half a year ago, during their presentation of their first play, Koutarou had saved Theia who had been attacked by Clan. And as thanks, Theia had performed the ceremony of bestowal unto Koutarou. Back then, Theia still wasn't honest with herself, so she had one-sidedly performed

the ceremony while Koutarou was asleep. That's why today, after confirming Koutarou's answer, the ceremony that started half a year ago was completed.

“The ceremony is already done! Take pride, my knight!”

“Don't be unreasonable! How can I take pride when you're hanging onto me like this?!”

Koutarou was still in a kneeling position and had Theia holding onto his head. He found it hard to take pride in that.

“You can do it if you try!”

“I can't! Seriously… And here I was taking this all serious and everything…”

Since he was going to become Theia's vassal, he wanted to do a formal ceremony. However, Theia had completely ignored that and omitted part of the ceremony. Dumbfounded, Koutarou returned to speaking the same way he usually did.

“What's important is confirming if your feelings and oath have forged a new bond, not the ceremony itself. There's no ceremony more meaningful than this.”

“That's an amazing argument, but it's not something you can just use as an excuse, is it?”

“Auu… could it be… that you really hate me?”

Theia's expression turned gloomy. She eased her grip around Koutarou a little and looked at his face with a worried look.

“Of course not!”

“Then it's not an excuse. This is fine.”

But she soon returned to a smile and embraced Koutarou's head with even more strength than before. Since she knew it wouldn't be long before they parted, she wanted to leave her warmth within the person she loved.

“Come on…”

“…Make sure you remember that, Koutarou.”

Theia whispered into Koutarou's ear and gently stroked his head.

“This is me. I am not a perfect princess. I'm rough, full of flaws and selfish. Even if we are far apart, make sure you don't forget that…”

“…Theia.”

“Yes?”

“You don't have as many flaws as you say… you're just unfair.”

“Fufu, I'll take that as a compliment.”

The hand stroking Koutarou's head was unbelievably gentle.

“…I won't say goodbye.”

“Yeah. We'll meet again, right?”

“I don't know when… but that's what I'm planning.”

Theia would be going back to her mother. And until she reached some kind of conclusion, she wouldn't see Koutarou again. But Theia didn't want to leave it at that. She was going to return to Earth some day and live together with Koutarou. And if the problems around room 106 were resolved by then, she might even take him back to Forthorthe with her. While she reluctantly had to leave, she hadn't given up on a bright future.

Homecoming

“But… it's strange.”

Theia muttered quietly.

“What is?”

“Just a while ago, I was feeling guilty over not being able to keep my promise to you. Even though I had made my decision of living with you, here I am leaving you behind.”

“If we meet again, there's nothing to feel guilty about.”

Koutarou had decided to believe that their future would be bright.

“Yes… maybe it's because you became my vassal. That's how I feel now. Aren't I self-centered?”

“That way's better. You're someone who stands above others. Everyone will feel more at ease if you remain optimistic.”

“Is that how it is?”

“Of course. You're my princess you know?”

“…”

“What?”

“I… I'm really happy but… it's a little embarrassing…”

“You… You've been saying that for an entire year, so don't get embarrassed now.”

“But… now that I have become your princess… I, you know…? I guess I wasn't mentally prepared…”

“…I think that part of you is unfair.”

As if answering Theia's feelings, Koutarou hugged Theia back.

“…You're my knight after all…”

Like that, the two formed a bond of master and servant, as the time for them to part came.

However, neither of them were pessimistic.

Because they believed that the bonds they had formed up until today would let them meet again.

Part 6

Once her talk with Koutarou had finished, Theia bade Ruth to see Koutarou off the ship while she stayed behind in her room. She said she would go back to sorting out her luggage.

“…I better thank her highness later…”

As Ruth was walking, she looked back for a moment. And as she looked at the door leading to Theia's room, she felt a little apologetic.

“What do you mean?”

When Koutarou asked that, Ruth turned to look at him. Because it was just the two of them, Koutarou and Ruth had their arms linked as they walked. As a result, they were close enough that they could kiss.

“Her highness probably gave me some time to say farewell to you.”

“Theia…”

Hearing that, Koutarou turned to look behind him. The door to Theia's room was slowly getting further away, but Koutarou felt like he could see Theia smiling.

“…She's been a little too kind lately. She should just be a little more selfish…”

“It might be just as you say, Master.”

“Eh?”

Koutarou stopped and looked at Ruth, and she stopped and looked back at him.

“If her highness knew who Master really was. I wonder if she'd return to Forthorthe so easily…”

Ruth questioned whether or not Theia could leave Koutarou behind on Earth if she knew he was the Blue Knight. Thinking about it normally, the option of leaving the Blue Knight, who was beloved by all of Forthorthe, behind wasn't something royalty would do. But for that, she would have to wait until Kiriha's and the others’ problems were resolved. But she didn't know what would happen to her mother during that time. And if by any chance Elfaria was to lose her life while Theia was away, she might choose to take her own.

Koutarou had been worried about affecting Theia and had told Ruth not to reveal the Blue Knight's identity to her. Back then, Ruth had mixed feelings about it, but now she felt like Koutarou's decision had been correct.

“Looking at the history, Forthorthe's royalty can't leave the Blue Knight behind, huh…”

“Yes. There was no mistake in your decision, Master. I am deeply grateful for your wise consideration.”

Ruth bowed deeply at this, and at the same time, she was deeply relieved. If she had been overcome by her feelings and told Theia the truth, this situation might have turned out a lot worse.

“But personally speaking… both me and her highness deeply regret leaving Master.”

Tears formed in Ruth's eyes as she looked up at Koutarou. Just like Theia, she had sworn to live with Koutarou.

“Ruth-san…”

“I'm sorry, I, I…”

In the next moment, Ruth threw her body at Koutarou and started crying while suppressing her voice. To her, parting with Koutarou was as painful as parting with Theia, because their meeting

was like a miracle. And now they had to part with him. No matter how much they swore that they would meet again, it was extremely painful. Unable to bear it any longer, all Ruth could do was cry.

“Master, why did you appear in front of us like this? You should have just appeared in a much more normal way!”

If their meeting had been simpler, all they had to do was take Koutarou with them. But fate wouldn't allow for that. Koutarou was needed by many, so Theia and Ruth couldn't keep him to themselves.

“I'm sorry…”

All Koutarou could do was apologize. It was hard for Koutarou to part with Ruth and Theia as well. But there was nothing he could do. Koutarou had things he had to do on Earth and Theia had to meet with her mother. All he could do was apologize to Ruth, who continued to cry, and gently hug her.

“Satomi-sama, Satomi-samaa!”

Ruth continued holding onto Koutarou and crying for a while longer. As if she was crying for Theia as well.

Homecoming

Part 7

Theia and Ruth left Earth on the night of that day.

“Everyone, thank you for everything up until today.”

“They were happy days. Words of gratitude are not enough for you.”

Standing in a corner of room 106, Theia and Ruth were saying their farewells. Behind them was a glowing wall that connected the room to the spaceship, the Blue Knight. Opposite of what they had done one year ago, Theia and Ruth were now going to leave Earth through that passage. And once that passage disappeared, they would never appear again. Even if they did, a long time would have already passed by then.

“Theia, this isn't the end right?”

Sanae, who was always energetic, had a gloomy expression. She looked at Theia and Ruth with a frown as she thought back of something Theia had said before.

When Sanae was about to re-enter her body, Theia had said that there had been a time when she was worried about being an alien, but that she had decided to forcibly overcome that. And she had told Sanae to forcibly overcome the loss of her memories.

That's why Sanae wanted Theia to overcome this parting as well. Though Theia had to leave, Sanae believed that they would meet again someday.

“Of course. I won't give up over something like this. I've decided to live with you all. It might not be possible right away, but I will definitely return.”

“You promise?”

“Yes. I am not lying, wait for my return.”

“Yeah!”

Theia lived up to Sanae's hopes and nodded powerfully. Seeing Theia like that, a smile finally returned to Sanae's lips. It wasn't like they would never meet again. In that case, she should see them off with a smile.

“Theia-chan, for you.”

After Sanae was Yurika.

She presented Theia with a shopping bag from a nearby convenience store.

“Hmm? What's this?”

“It's snacks and the latest manga. I figured you might get bored on your way home…”

The bag was filled with Yurika's consideration.

Forthorthe was 10 million light years away. And even with Forthorthe's technology, such a long journey would take several days. That's why Yurika had thought of getting Theia a present to kill time with, and after consulting with the contents of her wallet, she had decided on snacks and manga.

“Thank you, I'll make sure to enjoy it.”

Theia accepted Yurika's present with a smile.

Truth be told, she had tons of ways to kill time onboard the Blue Knight. They could be called necessities for space travel. And if they froze the time onboard the ship, there wouldn't be any need for it at all.

But Theia was happy for Yurika's consideration, so she accepted her present without saying anything. She didn't say she didn't need them, nor did she question who would even give a princess snacks and magazines from a convenience store.

“When I return here, I'll make sure to bring books and snacks from Forthorthe.”

“Yes, please do!”

Theia was happy that Yurika didn't consider her anything other than a good friend. She was far happier by that than being treated with respect as a princess.

“Theia-dono.”

“Kiriha… I'm sorry for having to leave so suddenly.”

When Kiriha came up next, Theia apologized politely.

Considering Kiriha's problem, with Theia gone, the power balance in room 106 would shift, causing Kiriha the most problems. She was worried that the radical faction that opposed Kiriha would pick up momentum.

“Satomi Koutarou will be your representative and the existence of the evil magical girls has been proven. There probably won't be any major moves for a while.”

However, Kiriha herself didn't seem to mind that much.

Koutarou would remain as the lord of the room, and the existence of the evil magical girls after room 106 had been confirmed. The radical faction was secretly connected with the evil magical girls, but since they couldn't official announce it, they wouldn't be able to openly work together. Because of that, Kiriha had plenty of time to prepare.

“I see. Well if you say so, it's probably true.”

“Leave it to me. We will protect this room until you return.”

“Please do. I'm trusting you.”

Theia knew very well just how tough Kiriha was. Even though she overwhelmed Kiriha in terms of power, she still had been unable to defeat her. Things would be alright if she left it to Kiriha.

“…Pardomshiha.”

While Theia and Kiriha were talking, Clan pulled on Ruth's sleeve.

“Clan-sama… this is goodbye for now.”

“Yes. It will be lonely here without you.”

Clan was going to remain on Earth instead of returning to Forthorthe. Officially, it was called a continuation of a scientific study. But in truth, she remained to back up Koutarou and the others.

“More importantly, Pardomshiha, there might be a need for you to brace yourself.”

“Eh?”

“I haven't heard anything about her majesty Elfaria falling ill from my information network. She might be in a really bad condition. That's why, take care of Theiamillis-san, please…”

“Thank you very much, Clan-sama. I am very grateful.”

Clan's Schweiger family is hostile towards Theia's Mastir family. And since the Schweiger family's technology was well renowned, they had a favorable relation with the military, unlike the Mastir family. As a result, she was able to gain access to information of a different kind than Theia.

Homecoming

Information regarding her majesty Elfaria's condition should be something the military and Schweiger family would love to get their hands on. And if that information hadn't reached Clan, it meant that the information must be extremely restricted. Though she didn't say it out loud, Clan feared that Elfaria might already have passed away.

“What are you talking about?”

That was when Theia, who had finished talking to Kiriha, came. As she did, Clan and Ruth interrupted what they were talking about and smiled at Theia.

“I was just passing on some things to Clan-sama.”

“T-That's right.”

“I see. We'll leave the rest to you after we're gone, Clan.”

“…Yes, leave it to me.”

Clan and Ruth had quickly come up with a different topic, but fortunately, Theia didn't seem to suspect them. Theia smiled and honestly said her farewells to Clan.

“Theia-chan, this is from me and Aika-san.”

“It's just something we prepared yesterday, but… take care.”

“Thank you. You two take care too.”

Shizuka and Maki had prepared a present. When Theia peeked into the paper bag she had been given, she showed a wide grin.

“Clothes, huh… What a splendid gift.”

The present from Shizuka and Maki were clothes and accessories from the shop in front of the station. They were unique to Earth and could be enjoyed for a longer period of time. Being a girl, this was something Theia was very happy over.

“…I feel like I've lost.”

Yurika compared the price, quality and the girlishness of her present to Shizuka’s and Maki’s present and dropped her shoulders.

“That's not true, Nijino-san. Theiamillis-san was happy for your present.”

“Yes. It's like Harumi said. That's fine in its own way. There is no need to feel shame.”

“I'm glad you said that.”

“And Nijino-san, if you're that embarrassed over your present, I feel even more embarrassed than you… Here, Theiamillis-san.”

“This is?”

“It's the manuscript from the play. I had everyone from the drama club sign it.”

“Oh!”

Next up, Harumi presented Theia with the manuscript from January. The cover had been signed by the members of the drama club. Harumi had done her best to prepare it.

“It must have been hard.”

“No. When I called them, they all came on their own… They told me to give you their regards.”

“I see… If I had more time, I would have liked to visit the drama club as well…”

Homecoming

Theia stroked the cover of the manuscript for a while before eventually looking out through the window and in the direction of Kitsushouharukaze high school. The play that had taken place there was a memorable event that had helped Theia grow immensely.

“Thanks to Theiamillis-san's manuscript I was able to make a lot of friends… that's why I'm very sad right now.”

“Harumi… I am too. I wanted to talk with you someday.”

Theia and Harumi shook hands. They both admired one another. Theia admired Harumi's behavior as a princess during the plays, and Harumi admired Theia's sun-like presence. Because they both had something the other didn't, there was a lot they could learn from each other. And they both regretted parting ways.

“Theia, Ruth-san.”

Waiting for the girls to finish saying their farewells, Koutarou stepped forward as the last person.

“Koutarou.”

“Satomi-sama, thank you for everything up until today…”

Theia and Ruth stood in front of Koutarou and looked at his face. They had met a lot of friends on the edge of the universe, and they had met their beloved as if through a miracle. Keeping themselves from crying was the best they could do before their parting.

“Theia, you did good. You can go home proud and go meet with your mother after such a long time.”

“Yes… I'll do just that…”

“You too, Ruth-san. Meet your family and spend some time with them. And then come visit us again some day. We'll always be waiting.”

“Satomi-sama… yes… Yes!”

Unable to bear it, tears began flowing from Ruth's eyes. Their relationship wasn't shallow enough for her to be able to hold herself back.

“Koutarou. I will leave this room to you. Even though your territory might be small, don't let your guard down. Defend it as the lord of this land until my return.”

“Don't worry. I'm the man who defended this room against the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire's princess Theiamillis without backing down so much as one step.”

“…So you were.”

As expected, tears started forming in Theia's eyes. Her eyes were moist, but she didn't shed any tears. That was because of her pride as a princess, and a symbol of her strong will to return to Earth.

“I think it's about time to go.”

“You're leaving already?”

“Yes. The longer I stay here, the more I wish to take everyone with me… Ruth.”

“Yes. Everyone, thank you so very much… Good bye.”

“Farewell.”

Theia and Ruth said their farewells one last time before turning around and headed for the passage leading to the Blue Knight.

“Theia, send letters from time to time! I'll send some too!”

Homecoming

“Farewell, Theia-dono. I'm looking forward to the day we meet again.”

“Theia-chan! I'll keep the continuation of the manga here!”

The remaining seven girls called out to Theia's and Ruth's backs. Hearing how many and how loud those voices were made Theia and Ruth realize once more just how blessed they had been.

Sensing their approach, the passage to the Blue Knight opened. As it did, Koutarou felt a sudden urge to stop the two.

Wait, don't go!

However, in the end, Koutarou was unable to say those words. He knew they would only cause trouble for the two. The words simply echoed inside of Koutarou. He was the only one who didn't say anything.

But just as Theia and Ruth were about to disappear, they nonchalantly looked back behind them. As if the voice inside of Koutarou had reached them. They simply stared at Koutarou, as if trying to burn his appearance into their minds.

Theia, Ruth-san…

The next moment, the two disappeared in the light.

The remaining eight didn't say anything, and a silence fell on the room. It wasn't until quite a while later that sound would return to this room. And just before that, a blue shooting star shot through the vivid, starry sky.

Harumi and Alaia

May 1, Saturday

Several days after Theia and Ruth had returned to Forthorthe, Koutarou paid a visit to Clan.

With Theia and Ruth gone, Corona House's defensive capabilities had fallen considerably. This was not just because of Theia and Ruth, but also because they no longer had the support of the spaceship, the Blue Knight. Though Maki and Harumi could fill in the lost numbers, only another spaceship could fill in for the Blue Knight. In its place, Clan had called back her own spaceship, the Hazy Moon, from Forthorthe. Hazy Moon had less offensive capabilities when compared to the Blue Knight, but since it contained technology from the Schweiger family, it had plenty of functions for stealth or search operations. Because of that, the Hazy Moon was as strong of a deterrent as the Blue Knight was. As a result, room 106 was as well defended as it always was.

And there was one more important advantage with this. Because the Hazy Moon had been built upon the achievements of the Schweiger family, it came equipped with the latest medical devices. Thanks to that, the Hazy Moon's presence was very reassuring for someone with a chronic disease.

Koutarou had come over to get more details on the physical examination for Harumi that had taken place the day before. He wanted to hear Clan's opinion on Harumi being able to control Signaltin like Alaia.

“Because this is very personal, I will omit any data regarding Harumi herself. Are you fine with that?”

“Yeah.”

Clan was sitting down by her desk and brought up the files regarding Harumi's examination. She then started explaining its contents in a way that Koutarou could understand.

“Roughly speaking, there weren't any problems that stood out. She was born with a weak constitution, but I can assist with that using Forthorthe's medical advantages.”

Forthorthe's medical advances were far greater than Earth's. Though Harumi had been born with a weak body, with Forthorthe's medical technology, it wouldn't be hard to give her a life close to that of a healthy person.

“Because she's now with us, the chances that she will be targeted by our enemies are higher, but at the same time the risks from her disease will be reduced, so overall, not much will change.”

“I see… Looking at it like that, I can feel a little less guilty about involving Harumi-senpai in our problems.”

Koutarou was worried about involving Harumi in any future fights. But since she as a result was now able to get more advanced treatment, he felt like it wasn't just all negatives.

“…There's a good and a bad side to everything.”

As Clan said that, she stopped moving her hands operating the computer and squinted with her eyes a little. Her eyes on the other side of the glasses were gentler than usual.

“Wasn't the same true for our meeting as well?”

“Now that you mention it…”

Koutarou and Clan had been enemies at first. They had intense fights where it wouldn't be strange for either of them to lose their lives. That was an obvious bad side. But now, things were different. They now treasured and supported each other. This was the good side of their meeting.

“The same is true about Theiamillis-san. She's parted ways with us, but she gets to meet her mother again, who she hasn't seen for quite some time.”

“Yeah, you're right.”

Theia had always lived separate from her family. Though she had left her friends on Earth again, she would get to meet her family. From Theia's point of view, it wasn't all negatives.

“…Now then, moving on to the main topic.”

Saying that, Clan adjusted her glasses and started operating the computer again. The displayed images changed and displayed different data instead.

“I'll start from the conclusion. The result of the psychological analysis says that Harumi is Harumi.”

“I see…”

Listening to Clan's report, Koutarou nodded his head once and exhaled. He had actually come here in the hopes of hearing that.

A while ago, Harumi had controlled Signaltin as if she was Alaia herself. As a result, this kind of suspicion popped up in Koutarou's mind. He wondered if there was some kind of connection between the two.

So he requested Clan to not just give her a physical checkup, but a mental one as well. And the results were as Clan had said.

“Harumi has Alaia-san's memories, but her personality has not been affected by it. Alaia's memories inside of Harumi's mind has perfectly overlapped with Harumi's memories about her role in the play. As a result, there is a clear line between Harumi's and Alaia's memories, meaning that their memories haven't mixed.”

“Wait a minute, where did her majesty's memories come from?”

“Magic is not my expertise, but… I believe it came from Signaltin.”

“The sword?”

“That's what I think. In order for Signaltin to manifest its true powers, it needs Alaia-san. But Alaia-san is not present in this age. And so, Signaltin sought after a replacement.”

“And Sakuraba-senpai was chosen?”

“Yes. Harumi has a clear image of Alaia-san thanks to the plays, right? And for the same reason, there's a clear line between their memories. So by inserting the real Alaia's memories on top of those, Harumi became able to use Signaltin without causing her any confusion.”

“So that's how it is…”

Koutarou nodded at Clan's explanation.

Like it had with Koutarou and Maki's contract, Signaltin tended to avoid interfering with others’ mind more than it had to. It might have inherited that intention from Alaia who had undone its seal.

If that was the case, when Signaltin looked for someone to serve as Alaia's replacement, it chose the one who would be the least affected by it, and it wasn't hard to guess who that would be. With that, Harumi was a convenient existence for Signaltin. Thanks to the groundwork laid down by the plays, there was no fear of causing Harumi any confusion.

And the memories of Alaia that Signaltin had ended at the same place as the last scene in the play. Thanks to that, inserting Alaia's memories into Harumi's didn't cause any contradictions.

For these various reasons, there was no one else more suited to accept Alaia's memories than Harumi.

“Her majesty probably would have done it like that.”

“Actually, there is one more possibility… though this is more dreamlike than magic, so I don't think it could be the case.”

“What do you mean?”

“That it was just a coincidence. That Harumi, who could do the same things as Alaia could, just happened to be there. But that can't be scientifically explained.”

“That's true, it would be hard for you to accept.”

“As a scientist, that isn't something my pride would allow.”

Clan had just called it a coincidence, but she actually had a somewhat more detailed image in her mind.

Harumi is the reincarnation of Alaia-san, and by pure chance, she happened to be Bertorion's senior at school. And once Signaltin came into contact with her, it revived her memories of her past life… But that's just far too convenient of a coincidence. As if something like that could ever be the case!

As a scientist, it was hard for Clan to mention what she had just imagined. It sounded far too much like a fairy tale and her pride wouldn't allow it.

“Anyways, Harumi is Harumi. She is not Alaia-san. That is all.”

“Got it. Thank you, Clan. I feel relieved hearing that.”

Koutarou had always been worried about if Alaia was inside of Harumi in some way. Because of that, he wasn't sure how to face her. And all of his conversations with her these past few days had been awkward.

But thanks to Clan, he now knew that while Harumi had Alaia's memories, she was still herself. Knowing that, he felt a little sad he wasn't able to meet Alaia again, but he felt relieved knowing that Harumi was Harumi.

Empress Elfaria

Part 1

May 19, Wednesday

It had almost been a month since the measures to get Yurika into a university had started. With Koutarou's strict guidance, Yurika's math drills increased in school year every week. She was now solving fifth grade math problems.

“…Uhm, Tarou-kun's average score for three subjects is 60 points, and he got 80 points on his literature test, so his average score for four subjects should be 70 points?”

Yurika was learning the basics of averaging, but she still hadn't fully understood it. And her calculation this time was wrong.

“Ah, no that's not right! This is a trap!”

But having been trained for a month, Yurika noticed her mistake just in time.

There's no way the last problem Satomi-san would give me would be this easy! I'm sure there's a trap I'm overlooking!

She hadn't noticed through mathematics, but because she had been studying under Koutarou's guidance for a month, she was able to sense danger. A glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel, would lead to an even greater despair, and Yurika knew that better than anyone else.

“That's right! I can't just average the average! First I have to add up the average score of all three subjects and then add in the 80 points, before calculating the average of the four subjects… Uh, it's 65 points! Satomi-san, I'm done!”

Sensing the danger she was walking towards, Yurika was able to find the correct answer. Happy, Yurika presented her solution to Koutarou with a smile.

“…”

However, Koutarou was completely silent and looking out the window. That's why Yurika had to call out Koutarou's name one more time to let him knew that she was done.

“…Satomi-san?”

“Hm? Ah, sorry. You're done?”

“Yes! The average score for Tarou-kun is 65 points!”

Yurika smiled again and handed her notebook to Koutarou. After he confirmed her answer, he nodded.

“Correct.”

This problem was the last one for the day. Having gotten it correct, it meant that Yurika had properly learned today's subject. That's why there was no more reason to be strict for today, so Koutarou showed Yurika a satisfied smile.

“Well done, Yurika.”

“Yes!”

Sensing that the atmosphere around Koutarou was softening up, Yurika presented her head to Koutarou. It was a gesture that Sanae would often do, and as of late Yurika had started to copy her.

“Good, good.”

“I did my best!”

Empress Elfaria

Koutarou's large hand patted Yurika on the head. Yurika smiled happily. As of late, she loved being praised by Koutarou like this. As a woman, she had a desire to show Koutarou her good sides. Not only could she fulfill her desire by being praised, but she was also happy being touched. Because of that, Yurika had been positive about studying in an attempt to get praised.

“Hm? You don't have to study any more today.”

Koutarou was done for the day, but for some reason, Yurika flipped to the next page of her book.

“Yes. But, but I wanted to prepare for tomorrow.”

“I'm impressed. But don't go overboard, okay?”

“Yes!”

If she prepared today, her study tomorrow should be easier. And that meant that she would make it easier for herself to be praised.

That was when the cellphone in Koutarou's pocket started vibrating. Koutarou pulled it out, and the name of his best worst friend was written on the display.

“…Mackenzie, it's rare for you to call at this hour.”

With cellphone in hand, Koutarou got up. There were too many people in room 106 for a phone call, so he left Yurika behind by the tea table and left the room.

“Good-bye, Satomi-san… Alright, I'll do a little more.”

Yurika said goodbye to Koutarou's back before turning back to her math problems. Seeing that Yurika and Koutarou's study session was over, the other girls started gathering around the tea table.

“Satomi-kun was looking up at the stars again…”

The first one to say anything was Harumi, who was seated next to Yurika.

Harumi's room was connected to room 106 via Clan's ship. Technology-wise, it worked the same way Theia and Ruth's gate did. As a result, Harumi appeared more frequently in room 106.

“Maybe he's really worried for Theia? Well… that's true for us too…”

Sanae took a bite off a rice cracker and replied to Harumi as she looked out the window. There, she saw the summer night's beautiful starry sky. Theia and Ruth had gone somewhere far off. That's why just like with Koutarou, all of the girls of room 106 found themselves looking up at the stars more often.

By the way, Sanae's room was connected to room 106 the same way Harumi's was. Since Sanae's parents trusted Yurika, she was in room 106 more often than Harumi. With the threat of Darkness Rainbow, they wanted to leave Sanae by Yurika's side.

“We've spent more than a year together. It's only natural.”

Shizuka joined Sanae and looked up at the stars. Theia and Ruth were close friends to her as well. At first, Shizuka had only been yelling at Theia for being reckless, but that was just at the start, and her memories of the two were almost all but happy. But now those two had just upped and left, and Shizuka felt as if she had lost a vital part of her everyday life.

“…I really won't work as Theia-san's or Ruth-san's replacement.”

Maki, who had only just come to room 106 recently, had less of a connection than the others with Theia and Ruth. As a result, her feelings were directed towards Koutarou and the girls here instead.

“Nobody could serve as anyone else's replacement. We would feel the same if anyone one of us was missing.”

Kiriha talked to Maki, who was showing a lonesome expression. Maki responded by raising her hand and gently putting her hand on her chest.

“Even me?”

“Of course. You're already a part of our lives.”

“Ah… yes!”

Thanks to Kiriha, Maki's expression turned a little brighter. Maki felt like she could understand how Kiriha felt. Only a month had passed since she came here, and she already felt like her everyday life in this room was important to her. And having Kiriha say that, Maki started feeling like she belonged here.

“But… I don't think that would be enough for him.”

The last one to speak was Clan. She hated sitting in a cramped space and was using her own invention to float in the air. Her appearance looked very similar to how Sanae looked in the past.

“It's okay. We only have to work together to support him.”

Yurika put her pen down and boldly stated so.

Having lost a family member in a very shocking fashion, parting with someone close held a special meaning to Koutarou. However, Yurika chose not to be pessimistic. She firmly believed that they could protect Koutarou together.

“…What's wrong? You've all got such serious expressions.”

Just around that time, Koutarou, who had finished his call with Kenji, returned. Noticing the serious atmosphere in the room he tilted his head in confusion.

“Hayaaaaaah!”

In response Yurika sprung up towards Koutarou. She clung onto his body and tried to perform a joint lock technique like the ones he always used on her. Yurika knew that neither words nor silence was needed. What was needed was to take action and continue taking action. And Yurika wanted the same thing. Doing this was necessary for both Koutarou and Yurika.

“Oh, what?!”

“Take thiiiss!”

“I don't know what's going on, but you're too naive!”

“Gyaaaaaa?!”

However, Yurika's techniques were but a trifling matter to Koutarou. He easily broke free from her move and turned the tables on her. Yurika's expression distorted in pain, but she was satisfied with this result.

Empress Elfaria

“Yurika-chan…”

“Well done, Nijino Yurika. She knows what we need and how to do it.”

At first glance, it simply looked like Yurika's surprise attack had failed and she was now being punished.

However, that was what was needed and Yurika hadn't hesitated to take action.

And that fact slowly sunk into the hearts of the girls watching.

“Hah!”

“Uwah?! Who is it this time?! S-Sakuraba-senpai?!”

Inspired by Yurika, the normally quiet Harumi took action. She was the one who had given Yurika that answer, and because of that, she understood the meaning behind her actions better than anyone.

“Ei.”

Harumi relied on her vague memory and tried to perform a joint lock technique on Koutarou's leg. But being so weak, she was unable to hold down Koutarou. That was when Harumi called out to the other girls.

“Everyone, come help!”

“Martial arts is my specialty!”

“Leave it to the adorable Sanae-chan! I've clung onto Koutarou's back for over a year! I know all of his ticklish spots!”

Shizuka and Sanae were the first to respond to Harumi. The two joyfully joined in on the attack on Koutarou.

“Seriously… physical labor is out of my expertise.”

“I'm surprisingly good at it. And besides, doesn't it look fun?”

Clan and Maki followed suit. They didn't want to be left out.

“Fufu, looks like things are getting interesting.”

The last to join in was Kiriha. Since she loved being mischievous around Koutarou, there was no way she would miss this chance.

“W-What now, all of a sudden, wahahahaha! Owowoww, ahahaha!”

With seven girls, some using wrestling moves, others tickling and others simply holding onto him and dulling his movements, not even Koutarou could do anything, and he helplessly tried the tickling and pain.

“What are you doing all of a sudden– owowow, don't touch that, that spot's no good, wahahaha!”

“Give it up, Satomi Koutarou. Resistance is futile.”

“Waaaaahhh~!”

Koutarou's countless screams echoed in room 106. But in the next moment, a sound loud enough to erase Koutarou's scream rang out.

It was the sound of a noisy siren that brought with it a serious sense of unease. The siren was coming from the bracelets that Koutarou and Clan were wearing.

“A large scale space quake detected. It is presumed, with 98% reliability, to be a warp out signature.”

Empress Elfaria

Hearing the siren blasting, everyone instinctively stopped moving. Silence returned to the room, and the only thing that could be heard was the artificial voice coming out from the bracelet. That voice belonged to the AI on Clan's ship, the Hazy Moon.

“Mass calculated from the warped space. Warning. In a few minutes, a fleet of four ships will warp out. The formation is one royal-class battleship, one spaceship carrier, and two medium-sized battleships. Reliability is 90%. This is an emergency situation, my princess.”

The contents of that report signaled that a large fight was about to start.

After receiving the report, Koutarou and the others all moved to the bridge of the Hazy Moon. If this was Theia returning, there would have been a message ahead of time, and it was hard to believe she would come with four ships. Regardless of who was about to warp out, it was quite clear that an incident was occurring.

“Emergency rescue signal received. It is being sent through hyperspace communication. Unable to verify the source, but considering the signal strength, there is a 99% chance of being from one of the four ships.”

The moment they entered the bridge, they received a new report. It was a report that one of the four ships about to appear was sending out a rescue signal, though it wasn't certain which of the ships was sending it. It wasn't even clear if it was being sent from one ship or from all of them. Transmissions during warp were difficult to interpret. The situation was hard to grasp.

But upon hearing that report, Clan spoke the name of the person sending the signal.

“…It's Theiamillis-san.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. I can't imagine it being from anyone but Theiamillis-san in this situation.”

Clan was certain that Theia was the one sending out the rescue signal.

If this had been a mere accident mid-warp, the signal sent over hyperspace would make use of all frequencies. Despite that, it was only sending on the frequency that the Hazy Moon normally used. In other words, this was a transmission from someone who knew that the Hazy Moon was close to Earth. And considering the fact that one of the four ships is a royal-class spaceship, then it was only obvious to believe it was the Blue Knight.

“And she is probably in big trouble.”

“…I bet.”

Koutarou nodded with a stern expression. Sanae, on the other hand, didn't understand and simply tilted her head in confusion.

“Hey, glasses girl, how can you tell?”

“She's asking me for help. What kind of reason could she have for ignoring her consideration for me and asking for help?”

“I see. You get along well with us, but your family are Theia's rivals, weren't they?”

Normally, Theia would want to hide that Clan was in a place like this. If she didn't, Clan's position within the Schweiger family would worsen. But despite knowing that, Theia was asking Clan for help. In other words, she was in a situation so dangerous that she has no other choice.

“Clan, we're going to help. Move us toward the position where that Blue Knight-like ship will appear.”

“I thought you'd say that, so we're already on our way.”

“Thanks, I owe you one.”

Koutarou thanked Clan and placed his hand on her shoulder. Clan responded by placing her hand on top of his and smiled.

“I don't mind. I can't let Theiamillis-san run off with a victory after all.”

“That's true, you're absolutely correct.”

Koutarou lightly squeezed Clan's shoulder before letting go and heading to the front of the bridge. In front of him was a large monitor, showing the stars twinkling in space. It served as a replacement for a window. On top of showing the stars, it also had all kinds of information overlaid on it. The four ships would soon appear.

Part 2

First, four blue lights appeared right where the Hazy Moon had predicted. There was one that was close, and three that were further away. They were in the position the Hazy Moon had forecast.

“Space quake detected. A fleet of four spaceships have warped out. One royal-class battleship, one spaceship carrier, one battleship, one defensive ship. The ship in the front belongs to the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire. It's the seventh royal class battleship, Reios Fatra Bertorion. The other three ships’ factions and names are unknown.”

The four lights that appeared shone like stars as they flew, leaving a long trail of light behind them. But the lights slowly faded away, and in their place, four large spaceships appeared.

“A gravitational wave communication has been received from Reios Fatra Bertorion just as it warped out. 'We are under attack by ships of an unknown faction, request immediate support.'”

Three ships were chasing after the lone one.

The ship being chased was over a kilometer long, and it even had the shape of a person. Behind it, the three other ships were in a line formation, chasing after it.

“Isn't that Theia's spaceship?! She's being attacked!”

Shizuka pointed at the monitor on the bridge and let out a scream. The ship being chased, the Blue Knight, had taken a lot of damage. The insides of the ship could be seen from the tears in the hull, and the areas around the holes were charred black. Because of that, the luster of the hull that was painted blue and white was greatly dimmed.

“Koutarou, they're shooting at Theia! We have to hurry!”

The damage was of course from the three ships chasing after it. They were shooting even now, and colorful lasers and beams flew through space. From time to time, the light was disturbed by the fires shooting out from the missiles. And while the Blue Knight was attacking back, it still had taken a lot of damage, and its attacks were sporadic at best.

“Not good! Clan, can't you do something?!”

“I'll try!”

Obliging to Koutarou's request, Clan operated the device by her seat and opened communications.

“…This is the second princess of the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire, Clariossa Daora Forthorthe. To the three unidentified ships, you are to stop your attacks immediately and surrender. Do so and I will spare your lives.”

Clan sent her hyperspace message using all frequencies. There was no way that her message wouldn't reach them if they were from Forthorthe.

“Kiriha-san, do you think they'll stop their attacks?”

Koutarou stared at the monitor with a serious expression as he asked Kiriha for her opinion. After thinking for a while, she answered.

“…There is a chance that it will work. But, the situation might get more complicated if it does.”

Before Kiriha could finish speaking, the three ships stopped firing and slowed down.

“Clan!”

“I know!”

Not missing her chance, Clan positioned the Hazy Moon between the Blue Knight and the other three ships. Though it was weaker than the Blue Knight in terms of sheer combat capabilities, having taken so much damage, the Hazy Moon should be stronger right now. It was dangerous, but necessary to protect the Blue Knight.

And like that, the Hazy Moon and the three ships faced each other. It seemed like the three ships weren't sure what to do, as they remained unmoving.

“…Clan, if it comes to it, work with the Blue Knight to counter attack.”

Koutarou could feel sweat run down his forehead as he placed his hand on Clan's shoulder again. The fact that he was putting a little strength into his grip was a sign that he knew how dangerous of a situation this was.

“…Yes… I know…”

Clan adjusted her glasses and stared at the monitor intensely. She didn't know if the Hazy Moon and the damaged Blue Knight could win against these three ships.

“Now then, what will they do…?”

“Go away, go away.”

“I don't want to die in a place like this!”

“God…”

“…It's frustrating not being able to do anything.”

“This could be so easily resolved if I could just punch them!”

If things turned into a battle between spaceships, there was almost nothing the girls of room 106 could do. Apart from Clan, the others could only pray for Theia's and their own safety. As the atmosphere on the bridge was reaching its peak in tension, it happened.

“A small container has been fired from the carrier. Space quake detected, generation of a warp field confirmed. The three unidentified ships are retreating.”

The three ships were wrapped in blue light again. The light was a technology used to allow the ships to travel long distances in a short amount of time. They had chosen to cease fighting and retreat.

“…Koutarou, what do we do?”

“Let them go. We don't really understand the situation.”

“Okay.”

Though the ships hadn't surrendered like Clan had wanted, she simply let them leave without attacking. Wrapped in light, the three ships accelerated and flew off like a shooting star, leaving behind a long trail of light.

“The three unidentified ships are leaving this region.”

As their trails became as long as they had been when they first arrived, the three ships completely disappeared. They moved faster than the speed of light.

And once they had left, only the small container left behind by the carrier remained.

Part 3

The Blue Knight that was slowly growing larger on the monitor was seriously damaged. Being very familiar with how it used to look, its appearance shocked Koutarou. It seemed that Theia and Ruth had somehow escaped a crisis where they suffered such serious attacks using just their own power.

Theia, just what happened on Forthorthe?

Seeing how severe the damage they got were, Koutarou felt uneasy. He wanted to make sure that Theia and Ruth were safe as soon as possible.

“Clan, can't we head over to them right away?”

“Just wait a moment. This region is still a bit unstable due to the influence from the three ships warping out. It's too dangerous to transfer live people right now.”

“I see…”

Koutarou endured his uneasiness as he stared at the Blue Knight closing in. It would take several minutes before the Blue Knight and the Hazy Moon could come into contact.

“More importantly, Koutarou. I know what's inside the container they sent.”

Clan operated the panel in front of her and displayed a hologram for Koutarou. Strangely enough, what he saw was a Forthorthe style suit for men. It was neither a pilot's uniform nor a military uniform either, but a fashionable and elegant formal suit.

“Is this what's inside?”

“Yes. There was practically no meaning in sending an unmanned ship to investigate.”

Because it was dangerous to directly collect the container using the Hazy Moon, Clan had sent an unmanned work machine to investigate it. However, the contents of the container didn't have anything dangerous in it; it only gave off a reaction of textiles. Once the container was opened, this suit was what appeared.

“Is there anything else?”

“There was nothing else inside. If it was a present, they should have just left a card as well…”

Clan had a puzzled look on her face. She had suspected they might have left a bomb behind as a souvenir, but it only contained a suit. It was hard to understand if they were enemies or not.

“A suit… a suit, huh…”

Koutarou had an idea of who this suit was from and for whom it was intended for.

To think he would really keep his promise… what a troublesome guy…

If Koutarou was correct, this wasn't a present, but rather the opposite. It was a challenge. And as Koutarou was thinking of the man whom the suit was from–

“Koutarou!”

He heard a voice he hadn't heard for a month. It was an unforgettable voice that everyone on the Hazy Moon had been waiting to hear.

Part 4

Once the owner of the voice entered the bridge, she started sprinting, and without any hesitation she kicked off the ground with all of her might and threw herself into the air. The golden hair on her head spread out through the air like a golden trailing flag.

“H-Hey, wait, wait!”

“I am back! Greet me with all your might!”

She shot through the air and headed straight for Koutarou with her hands spread out. It was obvious to anyone watching that she was planning on embracing him.

“I told you to waaiiit!”

“As if I wooouuuuld!”

If she was just planning on embracing him, Koutarou probably wouldn't have moved. But she had jumped off a quick sprint, from several stair steps above him, so she was flying towards Koutarou at a terrific speed. And with that kind of momentum, she easily knocked Koutarou to the ground. This could only be described as a violent expression of love.

“Ouch…”

“You fool! Why did you fall?! Are you telling me you can't accept my everything?!”

The girl who had thrown Koutarou to the floor straddled him and looked at his face with a dissatisfied expression. Her golden hair then tickled Koutarou's face.

“…That's just a metaphor, Theia.”

“That's not what I wanted to hear, my knight.”

The girl puffed up her cheeks. Her expression reminded Koutarou of a young girl he had met in the past Forthorthe. Partially thanks to his nostalgia, Koutarou found himself unable to complain.

“…Welcome back, Theia.”

“Fufu… I'm back, Koutarou.”

Like that, the girl, Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe, returned to Koutarou and the others.

Part 5

Because Theia couldn't wait any longer, Ruth transported her over using a small spaceship. Ruth was caught up doing some necessary procedures in the Hazy Moon's hangar, so she arrived to the bridge a little later than Theia.

As Ruth reached the bridge, she saw Theia gracefully flying through the air and then knocking Koutarou down.

“Ah…”

Theia and Koutarou were playing around. Just seeing that plain sight, large tears fell from Ruth's cheeks.

We're back… We're back with Master and everyone…

Ruth had assumed that they wouldn't meet again for at least another few years. If the current empress, Elfaria, had collapsed due to illness, they wouldn't be able to do anything until it was determined who would become the heir to the throne. And even once that was over, they wouldn't be able to return to Earth until Elfaria recovered from her illness. If Elfaria died instead, things would become even more complicated.

But through a strange twist of fate, Theia and Ruth had managed to return to Earth within a mere month. Though the current situation was bad, Ruth couldn't help but feel relieved when she saw the faces of those close to her.

“Theia, you're heavy.”

“What do you mean by heavy?! Are those the words you give to your highly esteemed master?!”

“While I hold you in high esteem, your boobs are small.”

“There you go being mean again! Didn't you say that the size of my breasts didn't matter?!”

“It matters now. I've had a change of heart.”

“Is this the mouth spouting such things? Take that, and this!”

“Ow, ouch, owowow!”

And most of all, Ruth was happy to meet the man she loved again. Theia hadn't behaved as anything but a proper princess this past month, but thanks to Koutarou she was now acting so childishly. Ruth knew what he meant for Theia, because he meant the same thing for her.

But…

On the other hand, meeting with their beloved ones in their current situation meant that they would involve them in their own problems. Because of that, joy and guilt intermixed, creating a complex emotion within Ruth.

“Koutarou, I've found Ruth!”

That was when Sanae spotted Ruth and reported that fact to Koutarou.

“Really?!”

“Kyaa?!”

Koutarou forcibly lifted up Theia and ran over to Ruth.

“Koutarou! Don't treat me so roughly! Put more love into it!”

“You know you tend to treat those things you love with less care, right?”

“Oh, well in that case… No no no, I won't get fooled by that!”

“Guess it can't be helped, geez…”

“Go on, do that thing.”

“What thing?”

“Holding me like a princess.”

“Okay, okay, as you wish, my princess.”

“Hmmhmm♪”

Even as Koutarou and Theia approached Ruth, they continued quarreling. They were more intense than normal, but their faces were brighter than ever, so Ruth's tears wouldn't stop.

“Ruth!”

Once they had reached Ruth, Theia slipped out of Koutarou's arms and placed herself behind Ruth.

“Your highness?”

When Ruth instinctively chased after Theia with her eyes, Theia whispered in a quiet voice only Ruth could hear.

“…You go dote on him as well.”

“Eh?”

In the next moment, Theia pushed Ruth forward.

“Kyaaaaa?!”

Ruth lost her balance and flailed her arms wildly as she fell towards the ground. Koutarou easily caught her since he was right in front of her.

“Are you okay, Ruth-san?”

“Mas— n-no, Satomi-sama! I'm fine, t-thank you!”

Having been caught off guard from being suddenly pushed, Ruth almost called Koutarou her Master in front of others. Shaken by those things, Ruth's voice faltered. In the next moment, she realized that she was being held in Koutarou's arms and her face turned red.

“Ah, ah, eh?! Uhm…”

Ruth couldn't form any words. There were so many things she wanted to tell him, but she couldn't find the words to convey it. Ruth opened and closed her mouth countless times in an attempt to form words, but the only thing she could do was shed tears.

“…Ruth-san.”

Koutarou noticed Ruth crying in his arms, and reached his right hand out towards her cheek to wipe her tears away. But since her tears wouldn't stop, he wiped a second and a third time.

“U-Uhm… I…”

Ruth didn't know what to do or what to say, and simply entrusted herself to Koutarou.

“…Welcome back, Ruth-san.”

“Ah…”

The moment she heard that, Ruth figured out something she wanted to say. And she went all-out to turn it into words.

“…I'm back… Satomi-sama…”

Empress Elfaria

They were words she had so often spoken. But Ruth had never tried harder to form those words.

Part 6

Koutarou, Theia, Ruth and the other seven girls all rejoiced in their meeting for a while. Once some time had passed and they were able to calm down a little, Theia began explaining what had happened once she returned to Forthorthe.

“…My mother being sick was a lie.”

Theia who had been smiling with joy just a moment ago now had a very gloomy expression. Thanks to their time together, Koutarou could read a lot from her expression. Koutarou had a very bad feeling about this.

“Lie? You mean you lied?”

“No, why would I have to lie?”

“That's true. Then whose lie was it?”

“It was the people trying to drag my mother off the throne. In other words, a coup d'état is happening in Forthorthe.”

“What?!”

“Just wait a minute Theiamillis-san! Is that true?!”

Since this was regarding Forthorthe, Clan who was listening to Theia, slammed her hands into the table the ten people sat down around and leaned forward towards Theia.

Clan was a Forthorthe princess as well. Recently, she was starting to be conscious of her position and matured as a royalty. And a coup d'état was a big deal for the country. Clan couldn't just stay quiet.

“Sadly, it's the truth. It seems the military are unable to overlook my mother's calls for disarmament any more. They placed mother under house arrest.”

Theia's mother, the current empress, Elfaria, was a pacifist that proclaimed disarmament.

The military of this age had gotten too strong, and a powerful force was hard to control. Elfaria insisted that if the military wasn't reduced to a reasonable force that could be controlled, they would eventually run out of control and cause a major incident.

The military heavily objected to this. In order to protect their pride from protecting Forthorthe for so many years, and to protect their vested interests producing vast profits, they did everything in their power to obstruct Elfaria.

But those obstructions were exactly what Elfaria was worried about. And once the obstructions turned more intense, they developed into a coup d'état. Ironically, the very act of objecting to Elfaria, proved that they were in a state that couldn't be controlled.

“Which means, Elle… uhm, Theia's mother being sick was just a trap to lure you out?”

“Yes. Since my captured mother wasn't listening to them, they were going to capture me and use me to negotiate.”

The military placed Elfaria under house arrest under the pretext of sickness. But even then, Elfaria wouldn't retract her statements of disarmament, so they decided to capture Theia and use her for their negotiations. So an encoded message was sent to Theia, calling her back to Forthorthe.

“No wonder I didn't hear any information about her majesty Elfaria's sickness. She wasn't sick after all. What's more, the military themselves have placed her under house arrest. It's not that they didn't leak this information, but they couldn't leak it.”

Empress Elfaria

“Wait, so why are you safe? You were tricked right?”

“That's because we realized that it might be a trap just before it was sprung…Ruth.”

“Yes.”

Ruth continued to explain from here.

“Actually, just before we left Earth, Clan-sama told me that she hadn't heard anything about the sickness from her information network.”

“Now that you mention it, I did.”

Because the Mastir family had a bad relationship with the military and the Schweiger family had a good relationship with them, the information they could get differed. Clan noticed that she hadn't heard anything about Elfaria's state, and as such, gave Ruth a warning.

“Back then, I too believed that her majesty might be seriously ill, but when I told her highness about this just before we arrived at Forthorthe, we had a bad feeling about all of this.”

The military, who strongly opposed the empress, had overlooked information as important as the empress's sickness. Realizing that, Theia felt like something was really out of place. And if that was intentional, Theia contemplated whether or not this might have been a coup d'état or that Elfaria had been placed under house arrest. That was what Theia's intuition was telling her.

“So instead of returning home according to the schedule, we returned home secretly, through an old retainer. If her majesty really was sick, we could think of it as a funny story. But if she wasn't, this wasn't something we could laugh off.”

“And like Theia suspected, it wasn't something you could laugh off, huh.”

Ruth nodded at Kiriha.

“Yes. Behind the scenes, the military was planning a coup d'état and had placed her majesty Elfaria under house arrest in the imperial palace.”

“So what did you do?”

Sanae excitedly intervened. Since she knew that Theia and Ruth had safely gotten away, she listened like she was hearing an adventurous tale.

“Supported by our loyal subjects, we rescued her majesty Elfaria and escaped to Earth aboard the Blue Knight.”

“So the coup d'état army were the ones chasing after you?”

“Yes, a part of it. Thanks to the efforts of Pardomshiha's and Wenranka's band of knights, only three ships managed to come after us.”

Wenranka was a distinguished family of knights on the same level as Pardomshiha, and they had shown absolute loyalty to the royal families since the Silver Princess's era. They didn't hesitate to side with the Mastir family in this crisis. Together with the Pardomshiha family, they played a major part in letting the Blue Knight escape.

“But, but, why did you flee to Earth? Wouldn't it be better to hide somewhere else?”

When it came to hiding places, the cowardly Yurika was the girl to ask.

It was known in Forthorthe that Theia had spent a year on Earth. So even the coup d'état army could guess where she'd have run off to. That's why Yurika felt like it was a bad idea to hide here.

“There are two reasons.”

Empress Elfaria

Hearing Yurika's doubts, Theia continued explaining.

“The first is a rule of diplomacy between planets. There is a principle of nonintervention with planets where formal diplomatic relationships haven't been established. That's why if I hide on Earth, the coup d'état army can't carelessly attack.”

Using illness as a pretext, the coup d'état army put Elfaria under house arrest. So there were no suspicions of Elfaria or Theia abusing their powers. If the coup d'état army launched an attack without reason that also involved the inhabitants of Earth, the coup d'état army would be doubted, and their support from the public would be weakened. Since they couldn't do anything that would make the public opinion side with Elfaria, until they could forge a crime to frame Theia with, they couldn't launch any major attack on Earth.

“The other reason, that there was nowhere else where we still have territory.”

“Territory?”

“Yes. The coup d'état army is pressuring Forthorthe, and the other territories have also fallen into their hands. Except for the territory on this planet.”

“Theia, could that territory be…”

“…The only territory rightfully ours that hasn't fallen into the hands of the coup d'état army… that is Corona House's room 106. This was the only place we could hide at.”

Theia was indirectly in control of room 106 through Koutarou. With all the other places under the coup d'état army's control, this place was Theia's last stronghold.

“In other words…”

After explaining that far, Theia clasped her hands together in front of her chest and looked up at Koutarou's face.

“…We came seeking your protection, Koutarou. And… we’re well aware that we would involve you and everyone else here in our fight…”

Theia was always strong minded and acting like a princess. But at this time she was uneasy and timid, which showed on her expression.

“We alone can't do anything anymore… We don't have enough help, wisdom and power. But it's not like we want to involve all of you! We don't want to make you unhappy, but we have no one else we can rely on!”

Theia desperately appealed to them.

Theia and Ruth had been cornered and had nowhere else to go. In that situation, they had come to rely on Koutarou and the others.

Sanae's spiritual powers, Kiriha's brain, Yurika's, Maki's and Harumi's magic. Clan's science, Shizuka's martial arts and Koutarou who combined all those powers. To Theia and Ruth who were lacking in numbers, Koutarou and the others would be a big help.

But it wasn't like Theia and Ruth wanted to involve Koutarou and the others in their fight. There really wasn't anything they could do but to cling onto their bonds.

“Please, help us, Koutarou! And everyone! I am aware how selfish I sound! I have gotten you involved into a dangerous fight you have nothing to do with! However, you are the only ones who trust us! And you're the only ones we trust!”

In that crisis, Theia relied on normal people. Not a legendary knight, nor the goddess of the dawn. Though they had various powers, they weren't all that different from Theia.

“That's why!”

But together with them, she would surely be able to do something. That's what she believed. They were Theia's last hope.

“…Please… lend us your power…”

As Theia said that, she lowered her head and closed her eyes. Her body was stiff and her hands were tightly held together. That was only obvious; she knew she was asking for something unreasonable.

“…What are you doing? Raise your head, Theia.”

Koutarou's voice sounded.

Those powerful words and the decisive will put into them drove themselves into Theia's chest.

“Eh?”

His words unfroze Theia's body and made her look up. Her eyes met with Koutarou's, and that glance of his was as powerful as his words.

Koutarou…?

Theia had never seen Koutarou with eyes like that before. So she didn't know what kind of feelings were behind them.

“Raise your head. Pull your expression together. Puff up your chest. You don't look like a ruler.”

Koutarou was more severe than normal. He wasn't even this strict when teaching Yurika.

“Koutarou, what are you…”

Theia felt pressured by the atmosphere around Koutarou. She hesitated, like any normal girl would.

“You've fundamentally misunderstood something.”

“I don't understand… what are you saying?”

“What is our relationship?”

“That's…”

Theia temporarily hesitated before answering.

“I am your princess. And you are… you are my knight.”

“Then there's an attitude that you should take, and words you should say.”

That was when Theia realized what Koutarou wanted.

“…B-But…”

But even if she understood, she couldn't quite do it. The kindness and love she had developed this past year got in the way.

“I'm only talking about your form. Not the feelings you put into it.”

“Koutarou…”

“Do it properly.”

“…”

Understanding Koutarou's intentions, Theia closed her eyes and took a deep breath. The next moment, she opened her eyes wide. Her expression completely changed. A strong will resided within her eyes and her expression was sharp. She was not an anxious girl from a few seconds ago, but a ruler that had decided to fight.

Empress Elfaria

Theia opened her mouth.

“My knight, Koutarou, carry out your duty to recapture our mother country.”

It was an oppressive and one-sided order. The Koutarou from one year ago would have absolutely refused.

“That's better.”

But once he had heard it, Koutarou nodded and smiled. Since that was the form and words he had been expecting, he had on a very bright and satisfied smile on his lips. But he quickly erased that smile and replaced it with the expression of a proud knight. Koutarou kneeled before Theia and placed his right hand on his chest.

“As you wish, princess Theiamillis.”

That was as long as Theia was able to keep herself from crying.

Part 7

Koutarou wasn't the only one who wanted to help Theia. All of the girls on the bridge of the Hazy Moon intended to do so.

“You're an idiot from time to time, Theia. There's no way we'd say no.”

“Yeah. Everyone loves you two.”

“Eventually, I will need everyone's help for my fight as well. If you hold back here, I'll have to hold back when it's my turn too.”

“Theiamillis-san is my precious friend. Also, an important scenario writer.”

“Theia-chan and Ruth-san are my tenants. So your enemy is my enemy.”

“I just became friends with you, Theia-san, but I know friends help each other out. Besides, Satomi-kun is getting all fired up… I don't need any more reason other than that.”

“I really don't like coup d'états. If they have a problem, then why don’t they just say so.”

“… Didn't you first come here to assassinate Theia?”

“It's about time you forget about that, Koutarou!”

Koutarou and the others naturally felt that they should help their friend in need. Besides, they had saved each other’s lives more than once or twice. There was no reason for them to refuse this time.

“…Thank you… for doing so much for us…”

“Thank you very much, everyone. I will never forget this day…”

Theia and Ruth said their thanks with their eyes full of tears.

Since they had escaped in a hurry, they didn't have anything that they could use as rewards. But even then, Koutarou and the others hadn't so much as hesitated to offer to help.

That made them incredibly happy, so they simply continued saying their thanks. They had no other way of showing their gratitude and joy.

Part 8

Once some time had passed and everyone had calmed down, Koutarou returned to their original topic.

“So Theia, what will you do now?”

“…T-That's right. Wait a moment.”

Having been asked by Koutarou, Theia wiped her tears away and slapped her cheeks a few times to psyche herself up. As she did, a strong will returned to Theia's expression. Apart from a slight blush when she looked at Koutarou, she looked like her normal self again.

“For starters, I want to gather information. While few, I do have allies on Forthorthe. After obtaining information from them, we'll wait for a chance.”

“We won't be able to do anything even if we go to Forthorthe without information, huh.”

“Precisely.”

Theia nodded and continued.

“At the same time, we have to protect ourselves. The coup d'état army will eventually launch some kind of attack on me and mother. Of course, we can't let them. We'll most likely have to defeat all the enemies they'll continuously send at us.”

The coup d'état army would eventually change their policy to silence Theia and her mother, either by capturing them or murdering them. In order to do that, they would need to frame them for something beforehand. At which point they could kill them by claiming that Theia and her mother resisted during their arrest.

“Which means that the current problem will be the strength of the enemies they send and their numbers.”

Having heard Theia's explanation, Kiriha listed the problems.

Theia's side was still lacking in information in order for them to make a move, that's why defending themselves until they could gather everything they needed was the number one priority. And if that was the case, they'd need to predict the enemy's numbers and strength and prepare for them. If they made a mistake here, they would pay for it dearly.

“What do you think?”

“In order for them to operate in Japan, there will have to be an upper limit for the number of soldiers. At most, it would be around 50 men.”

50 soldiers were what Kiriha and the People of the Earth had used for their simulations of a surface invasion. Having more soldiers would of course make the force more formidable, but they would stand out even more. Capturing or assassinating Theia and Elfaria was a mission that needed to be done in secret, so sending more than 50 men was unreasonable.

“What about in space?”

“A space battle is hard to imagine. Even with Forthorthe's technology, it must be hard to fight without being observed from Earth, right?”

“Clan, how about it?”

“Let's see… With my Hazy Moon's stealth capabilities, a battle in orbit might be possible, but it's not very realistic. And I find it hard to believe that the Blue Knight could win in that state…”

Not wanting to be found applied to space battles as well. Since there were even less places to hide in space, any battle would stand out. In order to avoid being found, they would need to fight

far away from Earth or make use of ships with stealth capabilities like Clan's. But equipping ships with stealth would sap away combat potential. The same should be true for the coup d'état army, and a lone stealth ship probably wouldn't be able to beat Theia's Blue Knight. Of course, it might be possible in greater numbers, but it would be difficult to coordinate them in battle, making it unrealistic.

“Which means that the Blue Knight won't be getting attacked even if we leave it in orbit like this.”

Normally, the Blue Knight orbited Earth, pretending to be an asteroid. Finding it would be hard, and even if they did, since it was so close to Earth, they wouldn't be able to do anything. As long as the Blue Knight didn't move, there would be no fear of attacks.

“Can I ask something?”

That was when Shizuka raised her hand.

“What?”

“If the Blue Knight won't be targeted, why don't you two hide in it?”

“That's not a bad choice, but it would be bad if my mother and I were in the same place. And if we cut off our link to Earth, we'll eventually starve to death. We most likely won't be able to avoid an attack on the ground.”

Considering the worst case scenario, it would be bad for Theia and Elfaria to be in the same place. They had to hide in different places to prevent the possibility of both of them being captured or killed at the same time.

On top of that, the Blue Knight didn't have an unlimited amount of supplies. They had to resupply from the ground at regular intervals. But if the coup d'état army locked down the ground, they would be unable to do so. Without supplies, it would be impossible to hide themselves.

It was because of these two reasons that a battle on Earth was inevitable.

“That's true, I'm against being sieged as well.”

There was one more reason why Koutarou was against being sieged.

“…If that guy's on Earth, there's no guarantee that the Blue Knight won't be found in orbit.”

“That guy? Who do you mean?”

“DKI's Elexis. He's back on Earth.”

“Satomi-sama, are you sure?!”

The moment Elexis's name popped up, Ruth's face turned pale, and for a good reason. He was her past fiancé and the CEO of Dragon Knight Industries, a conglomerate working with the military.

“Yeah, I'm sure of it.”

Koutarou nodded.

Koutarou was sure that Elexis was on Earth. He only had one reason to suspect that, and that was the contents of the container a little while ago.

In the past, when Koutarou had fought Elexis, Koutarou's clothes had been torn to pieces by a missile's explosion. Back then, Elexis had said that he would give Koutarou one of his old suits.

The container from before had a suit in it, and Koutarou just knew it was from Elexis.

“Since he's here, those unidentified ships should be new models from DKI. Who knows what kind of equipment it has…”

Empress Elfaria

Elexis's enterprise, DKI, had a lot of technologies they developed themselves. And when Koutarou had fought Elexis in the past, he had used all kinds of technology. While they had fortunately managed to fend him off, DKI's power couldn't be underestimated. They might have a means to find the Blue Knight.

Or, that suit might be it… I might be playing into his hand, but we can't just leave Theia and Ruth in space…

Koutarou was suspecting that the “equipment” in question was the suit. By delivering the promised suit, Elexis revealed DKI's involvement and implanted the suspicion that he might find them even if they hide. That's what Koutarou thought.

But even with that in his mind, Koutarou suspected that hiding in space had a very high risk. Having your supply route cut off would be bad. Even though it might be a trap, they couldn't avoid intercepting the enemy forces on the ground.

“We'll have to include that into our plans as well.”

Kiriha came to the same conclusion as Koutarou. Her expression was severe.

“Can I trust you with that, Kiriha?”

“It's a bit difficult for me to approach, but… I'll give it a shot.”

In this situation, the attacking side had an overwhelming advantage. It was very difficult for the defending side to prepare for all kinds of possible attacks. It was a challenging task, even for the intelligent Kiriha.

“Your highness, the passage is almost fully stabilized.”

With the explanation over for now, Ruth pulled up a hologram of some kind of data and showed it to Theia.

“Hm, very well. Contact the other side.”

“Yes.”

After giving Ruth instructions, Theia turned towards Koutarou and the others.

“Actually, there is a person I would like to introduce to all of you.”

“Introduce?”

When it came to Theia introducing someone, there couldn't be that many. And there was one person who had been mentioned a few times already that wasn't here.

“My mother, Elfaria.”

At the same time Theia spoke her name, a beautiful woman appeared behind her. With the instability from the warp out diffused, a gate connecting the Blue Knight and the Hazy Moon had been opened, and that woman had travelled through it.

“…Nice to meet you, ladies and gentlemen.”

That woman was the 130th empress of the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire, Elfaria Dana Forthorthe.

Empress Elfaria

Empress Elfaria

Elfaria had fled with nothing but the clothes on her back, so she was wearing clothes and accessories more toned down than normal. But even then, what she was wearing looked exceptionally luxurious. Her well-tailored dress made from expensive looking textiles made that obvious. She had a brilliant golden hair like Theia had, and a hair ornament covered with jewels. She also had on pure-white shoes, lined with gold and jewels. Amongst countless other things. Elfaria had an appearance fitting for an empress of an empire in control of many worlds.

“My daughter is always in your care, I'm Theia's mother, Elfaria. It is nice to meet you.”

But she was a very open hearted person. Befitting of a pacifist, she spoke with a gentle smile.

“…Y-You could buy three mansions using what she is wearing…”

“Yurika, keep it together! She might be ridiculously rich, but she seems like a nice person!”

“Haah… so this is the empress of a country that's been around for over 2,000 years…”

“So that's Theia's mother… I'm glad to see she is healthy.”

“Will Clan-san and Theia-san turn out like that too eventually?”

“That's my plan. In order to become the next empress, I'd have to at the very least be on equal grounds with her majesty.”

“…The next empress huh… I'll make sure to absorb all of this, and make use of it in the next play…”

The girls instinctively held their breath when they saw Elfaria's beauty. It wasn't just her clothes, but Elfaria herself was just as beautiful. She had the attractiveness of an adult, and a youthful look that made it hard to believe she was a mother. Thanks to that, the clothes she was wearing didn't look gaudy. In fact, they served to amplify her beauty. The empress Elfaria was the kind of person that looked picturesque just by standing still.

“…She sure is making herself look young.”

Amongst the many overwhelmed by Elfaria, only one remained normal. That person was sending a frosty glance towards Elfaria and easily cast her beauty aside.

“She should be in her late thirties… yet she looks like a young girl…”

Those cold words in front of the empress of Forthorthe came from the only man on the bridge, Koutarou.

“Ah?!”

Hearing those disrespectful words, Elfaria noticed Koutarou's existence. She had definitely not heard any praise, yet she smiled brightly. Like a young girl, her eyes sparkled and she ran up to Koutarou.

“Long time no see, Reio—”

“Aaaaaahhhh!”

Noticing what Elfaria was about to say before anyone else, Koutarou hurriedly caught her and blocked her mouth. He then wrapped his arm around her neck, forcibly drew her closer to him and whispered into her ear.

“Elle, if you say any more than that, I'll punch you, even if you are the empress.”

“Hmmh, Mhhm.”

Sensing that Koutarou was serious, Elfaria frantically nodded her head. After that Koutarou let go of her, but Elfaria didn't move right away, and instead whispered into his ear.

Empress Elfaria

“…Reios-sama, you still haven't told Theia the truth, even in this situation?”

“…How could I tell her? Do you want to expose Theia to danger?”

“…I don't think there's anything more dangerous than a coup d'état though…”

A sudden shout, rude behavior, and an empress that allowed it. On top of that, they were secretly talking about something. Koutarou and Elfaria's strange behavior astonished most of the girls on the bridge. Theia represented the girls and posed a question to Koutarou.

“Koutarou, have you spoken to mother before?”

As far as Theia knew, Koutarou and Elfaria had never met before. Theia had mentioned Koutarou to Elfaria in the past a few times, though those had only been small talk. But the two of them most certainly didn't look like this was their first time meeting. That's why Theia believed that Koutarou had somehow managed to contact Elfaria after she had given him full access to the Blue Knight's systems.

“N-No, it was my misunderstanding. She just happened to look like someone I know. Right, Elle?”

“Elle?”

Theia tilted her head at that strangely intimate nickname. Having realized his own mistake, Koutarou hurried to correct himself.

“Uhm, I mean… your majesty, Elfaria.”

“That's right Theia. This is my first time meeting Reios-sama—”

A thud could be heard.

“You're doing that on purpose, aren't you, your majesty?!”

“Owowow… that's not true, this is our first time meeting after all.”

“Hmm??”

But every time Koutarou was about to convince Theia, Elfaria mixed things up. It would take a little while longer until Koutarou could convince Theia.

Part 9

Seeing how Koutarou and Elfaria were behaving, Ruth came up with a certain theory.

“…Could this be…”

That theory was that Koutarou and Elfaria had met in the past when Koutarou was returning home from Forthorthe.

Using that theory as her premise, there were a lot of things that started to stick out. And a prime example of that was the Blue Knight's maneuver suit, Koutarou's blue armor.

When Koutarou first put on the suit, it matched his physique perfectly, and there was no need for any minor adjustments whatsoever. At first, Ruth had only thought of that as pure chance, but when she thought about it now, it was strange.

As an archaeologist, Elfaria was supposed to have reproduced that armor based on descriptions in ancient documents. It was easy to think that Elfaria had redesigned the armor based off of Koutarou's measurements in the past Forthorthe, but that wasn't the case.

A few months had passed between Koutarou first putting on the armor and him being sent to the past Forthorthe. It was hard to believe that Koutarou, who was in the middle of his growth spurt, hadn't changed a bit. Just height wise, there should be a few centimeters difference. So if Elfaria really had based her measurements off of an old document, the armor should have had made some adjustments, but it hadn't.

Apart from it being pure chance, Ruth only had one other possibility in mind: Elfaria could have met with Koutarou before starting her work on the armor, and obtained the initial data at the time. That was the only way for her to know what measurements Koutarou would have when he first wore the armor.

“…At this rate, it might not have been a coincidence that her highness's trial was to invade Satomi-sama's room…”

Elfaria was a famed archaeologist, but at the same time she was a specialist when it came to computers. That was because being an archaeologist in this age in Forthorthe required extensive knowledge of ancient computers.

And it was because of that that Elfaria might have made some alterations to make Theia's trial an invasion of Koutarou's room. All she had to do was hack the computer before it decided on the contents of Theia's trial after all. And Elfaria had a strong motive to do so as well.

Elfaria, who had a lot of enemies, would want to put her daughter, Theia, somewhere safe before making any major political moves, like proclaiming disarmament. And if asked where the safest place would be, citizens of Forthorthe would surely reply as such:

Next to the Blue Knight, Reios Fatra Bertorion.

We might have been moving all according to her majesty's plans all along…

Ruth started to suspect that everything was according to Elfaria's plan. Raising Theia as a Blue Knight fan and choosing Ruth as her guard. It might all have been to protect Theia, or to have her meet with Koutarou.

Part 10

Once Elfaria had introduced herself, Koutarou and the others started their own introductions. The introductions took place one at a time in private in parallel to a strategy meeting. And since there were eight people that hadn't meet Elfaria before, it took nearly an hour before it was Clan's turn as the last one.

“It's been awhile, Clan-san.”

“I see you haven't changed at all, your majesty.”

“I'm glad we could meet again.”

As Elfaria said that, her expression changed a little, into the expression of someone meeting an old friend.

“Truth be told, I've always been watching over you until today.”

“Me?”

Clan put her hand on her chest. Her eyes behind her glasses showed surprise.

“Yes. I watched over as you matured, and started looking like you did in my memories, eagerly awaiting for you to become the person I know.”

“Then, when I left for Earth…”

“I danced for joy, thinking that the time had finally come.”

“You weren't worried for Theiamillis-san?”

“Why would I? I already knew the results, and besides, Reios-sama was with her.”

Elfaria and Clan both turned to look at Koutarou.

He was in the middle of a serious looking discussion with Theia and Kiriha. That wasn't the face of the boy Satomi Koutarou, but the legendary hero, the Blue Knight. It was the face that Clan had monopolized until today.

“In fact, I'm more worried now.”

“That's true. We're currently in a very severe situation and—”

“No, no, I'm not worried about that.”

Clan thought that Elfaria's worry was the coup d'état. However, she smiled and shook her head. She wasn't worried about that.

“Whatever happens with the coup d'état happens. And if I am defeated whilst walking alongside the Blue Knight, then so be it. As long as I do my best for everyone's sake, I won't have any regrets.”

“Then what are you worried about?”

“That girl. Harumi…”

“Harumi?”

It turns out that Elfaria was worried about the girl behind Koutarou listening in on the strategy meeting, Sakuraba Harumi. But Harumi didn't look like a threat to Clan. She couldn't understand what Elfaria worried about.

“She looks just like the silver princess. It's like she is her reincarnation.”

“Surely that can't be… She might be able to control Signaltin in this age, and has Alaia's memories… but Harumi is herself, she's a different person than Alaia-san.”

Empress Elfaria

“'If I had met you first… if… I had asked you first… what would you do, Koutarou-sama?'”

“Eh?”

“They're the words of the Silver Princess trying to stop Reios-sama. I found those words in history of the translation device, in the armor's data that you gave me in the past.”

20 years ago, Elfaria had asked Clan for the data from Koutarou's armor. Since the data had direct recordings of important history in Forthorthe, it was something she would love to get her hands on.

“That's what the Silver Princess told Reios-sama, and Harumi met him before anyone else, and now she is serving as the Silver Princess's replacement. There's nothing I'm more worried about than this.”

Elfaria smiled wryly. If that wasn't by pure chance, then what did it mean? To Elfaria who wished for her daughter's happiness, there was nothing that worried her more than that.

“…Fate might not be on Theia's side.”

“There's no need to worry. Your majesty.”

However, Clan wasn't worried like Elfaria was. This time it was Clan's turn to smile.

“Even if your worry comes true, Bertorion isn't as simple of a man to only accept just Harumi.”

“You sound confident, Clan-san.”

“I guess you could call it a woman's intuition.”

“Well that's a problem. It seems I've found another reason to worry.”

“I won't back down easily.”

“My, fufu… Still, it feels very strange to hear you speaking of a woman's intuition.”

“Even if you're the empress, I won't forgive that kind of rudeness… I'm aware of it myself too though, fufu.”

“Fufufufu… Allow me to formally apologize, princess Clariossa.”

Before long, the two were laughing together. Their first meeting in 20 years proceeded peacefully. But something served to break that peacefulness, and it was Clan's bracelet that was vibrating.

“Oh?”

“What's the matter?”

“Uhm… it's a message from my family. What could it be?”

Clan operated a nearby terminal and brought up the message.

“This is…?”

And once she read the contents of it, the peaceful atmosphere around Clan vanished in an instant.

The message Clan had received was actually a demand from the military sent through her family. The military wanted Clan and the Hazy Moon to retreat.

The military didn't know about Clan's change of heart or her growth, so they still thought she was after Theia. In other words, that she was an ally, and they didn't want her involved in this. There was also the chance that Theia might use Clan by sending an emergency rescue signal again. And in order to avoid that, they wanted Clan to fall back.

Empress Elfaria

Looking at the laws, it was only obvious that Clan would rescue the Blue Knight a little while ago. After receiving an emergency rescue signal, obeying the law, Clan would practically be forced to side with Theia upon seeing the Blue Knight being attacked by unidentified ships. And because the three unidentified ships knew that, they left without fighting against Clan.

The military didn't want to take a stance against the Schweiger family that they had a deep connection with. But as long as Clan was in the area around Earth, it was only obvious she'd be used by Theia again. That's why they sent a message through the Schweiger family to have Clan fall back.

Part 11

Immediately after receiving that message, Clan consulted with Koutarou and the others. Clan was now Koutarou and Theia's ally, and she had also been friends with Elfaria for 20 years. She wasn't cruel enough to retreat without consulting with those close to her.

“…This is bad. Having me retreat is proof that the attack is near. We should also assume that they're planning to attack in space.”

“Clan, retreat to a safe area.”

“No!”

Koutarou recommended retreating, but Clan shook her head.

“Are you telling me to obey the coup d'état army?! That's not a funny joke! I might still be immature, but I am a proud member of the Forthorthe royalty!”

Having grown, Clan couldn't accept the coup d'état's cowardly way of doing things. She was planning on standing with Theia and Elfaria and fight.

“Please, Clan. Take the civilians with you and retreat.”

However, Theia's words lowered Clan's resistance.

“Civilians?”

“That's right. The people that helped me and my mother to escape are on the Blue Knight. We can't fight with them still onboard. Please protect them on your Hazy Moon, just in case.”

“That's…”

Clan started to hesitate.

Theia had considered her ways of fighting, and that included all-out attacks. But she was hesitant to do so with people she was indebted to onboard. Evacuating the Blue Knight would be easy with just Theia and Ruth, but with so many civilians onboard, it wouldn't be. That would limit that kinds of attacks they could do.

“I want you to do so too, Clan. If they are in danger, it will be your job to escape with Theia and her majesty. Until then, I want you to keep away and hide.”

Because the Hazy Moon had such excellent stealth capabilities, Clan wouldn't have to fall back far in order to keep herself from being detected by the coup d'état army. That would allow the Hazy Moon to remain unharmed until it was needed.

“…I… understand…”

While mortified, Clan eventually obeyed Koutarou. She knew it had to be done. But simply watching as the empress and Blue Knight headed into battle was frustrating.

Fate might not be on my side either…

Clan was reminded of what Elfaria had said just a moment ago. She started thinking of herself as a side character seeing the main characters off before the climax.

Part 12

The coup d'état army chasing after Theia and Elfaria were using newly built ships, and it was unknown whose side they were on. Which meant that they were operating as a fleet that shouldn't have existed. That was why they couldn't contact Clan directly and had to communicate with her through HQ. Because of that, there was a large time lag between communications, and any detailed discussion was difficult.

“Elexis-sama, we have gotten a reply from the Schweiger family.”

“And the results?”

“It seems princess Clariossa will retreat. But if we attack shortly after she retreats, she will be suspected, so she wants some time.”

“How many days?”

“Three.”

“Hmm… It was pretty sudden, and the top brass didn't give her highness any information. So three days sounds about right.”

Having received a report on Clan, Elexis leaned on his chair, deep in thought. This was the bridge of the carrier, and Elexis was sitting in the commander's seat.

Like Koutarou had suspected, the three ships were under Elexis's command. DKI had secretly produced a fleet of ships, and the Melcemheim band of knights, which Elexis had a deep bond thanks to one of his distant relatives who was the captain of this carrier, was controlling them. Everyone with the rank of captain and above were from the Melcemheim family, with Elexis taking command.

“That's cutting it close to our time limit.”

“But we made it. Either way, we'd only have time for one attack. So there's no need to worry for some minor loss of time. We can just think of it as valuing our relationship with the Schweiger family.”

The military was chasing after Theia and Elfaria in a highly illegal way through Elexis, and DKI's manpower and equipment, but there was a restriction on how much time they could spend. If they took too long, they wouldn't be able to cover it all up.

After that, they would need to chase them legally, but before that, they would need to frame Theia and Elfaria for a crime. Of course, the empress and princess wouldn't do anything illegal, so it would take a lot of effort to frame them. And while they made their preparations, they couldn't touch the two.

Which meant that there wasn't much time to attack Theia and Elfaria before a long break would be forced on the attacks. Since Clan would retreat before the time was up, Elexis didn't think much of it. He believed he would only have one chance to attack either way, so it had no effect on his plan.

“In fact, I'm more worried about him.”

“Him?”

At first, the captain didn't understand who Elexis was referring to and gave him a puzzled look.

“You don't know?”

“…Ah, the man you sent a suit to?”

Elexis's expression at the time was the same as when he had packed his suit into the container and launched it. Thanks to that, the captain was quickly able to pick up on who Elexis meant.

Empress Elfaria

“That's right… You could say that everything hinges on whether or not we can beat that extraordinary boy, Koutarou-kun.”

“Can we win?”

“We will. I've made preparations for just that reason.”

Elexis was smiling. Tension could be seen in his expression, but he showed a trace of confidence and joy. To the captain, it looked like Elexis was about to play a game with a good friend.

“…You look like you're having fun, Elexis-sama.”

“Oh it's fun. This might sound imprudent, but I'm having a blast.”

“I don't have the composure to laugh. This is an event that will decide the future of Forthorthe.”

“I'm not worried for Forthorthe's future in the slightest. Because no matter who reigns after her majesty, Elfaria, their political views will be closer to my ideals.”

“Even if that's princess Theiamillis?”

“That's what I believe.”

Elexis didn't think it was possible for any future rulers to manage their politics without making use of the coup d'état that happened during Elfaria's reign. And by taking advantage of that, it would be easy for DKI to raise their profits. Likewise, it would be easy to make the world a better place, as was Elexis's personal desire. Just by having the coup d'état occur was enough to accomplish many of Elexis's goals.

“Besides, I am confident I can survive no matter what way the world turns out.”

“There won't be any losses for you, and you're confident you can survive no matter what happens. And that's why it's him?”

“Yes. Not even my most desperate efforts might be enough. I've never met an opponent like that before. Can’t you tell? I'm going all out for the first time in my life.”

Before he met Koutarou, Elexis had always been the victor. He could repel all of his enemies without even getting serious. Because of that, he felt like life wasn't offering much of a challenge. Part of why he had worked together with the military to change the world was because he wanted a challenge. That was also why he was present on site. Normally, there would be no need for the CEO of DKI to be on the frontlines.

And that was when he had met him. Koutarou had powers which surpassed his knowledge, and confidence unfitting for someone his age. Elexis's couldn't even imagine what Koutarou had experienced to turn him into what he was. And because of that, he couldn't help but leap for joy. Even more, he was happy that he had lost. He felt immense joy having found an opponent that required him to push himself to the limit.

“You make it sound like you don't even mind if you lose.”

“Oh that wasn't my intention. Though I might not look like it, but I hate losing. Well, if I do lose, my enjoyment will be prolonged.”

“Then I will put my hopes on your hate on losing.”

“Don't worry. That side of me is hardcore.”

Elexis and the captain smiled. Partly because they were related, partly because Elexis and the Melcemheim band of knights were strong, but most of all, because they trusted one another.

Ground Battle

Part 1

May 22, Saturday

The three days that Clan had asked the military for was used for various preparations. Those preparations included an emergency repair of the Blue Knight, securing a shelter on the ground, moving the civilians Theia had with her to the Hazy Moon and more.

After repeated gathering of information and discussion, Kiriha decided on everyone's deployment as followed.

First, Theia, Ruth and Koutarou would be placed aboard the Blue Knight. This was to keep Elfaria and Theia from being in the same place and to keep both of them from being attacked at the same time. In the worst case scenario, Theia and Ruth would have to leave Earth. Koutarou had been placed on the Blue Knight for him to be able to respond to trouble in both space and on the ground. If the girls ran into trouble on the ground, he would descend and support them. And if the enemy attacked from space, then he would stay onboard and control the ship. Since doing the opposite would be difficult, he was stationed in the ship.

Clan took the Hazy Moon and the civilians and moved away from the expected battlefield. Since she would use stealth, there was no fear of her getting forcibly involved. Clan's role was to standby, protect the civilians and assist Koutarou and the others in the case of an emergency.

The remaining six girls would protect Elfaria on the ground. Kiriha's subordinates would assist with this. But since Kiriha and her subordinates were from the conservative faction, there weren't that many of them that were skilled at fighting. She also needed to leave people behind to restrain the radical faction. Because of that, Kiriha had only been able to gather a little more than ten subordinates in the short time she had. Adding her subordinates, there were a total of 20. Kiriha expected their enemy to have up to 50 men on their side. Though the girls were exceptionally strong, it was hard to tell if they would be able to protect Elfaria.

The battlefield Kiriha had chosen was a small mountain on the outskirts of Kitsushouharukaze city. This was to keep the battle from affecting the city and to prepare traps beforehand. For that reason, Kiriha wanted to stay out of the city, but if she strayed too far, she would face more troops than she had expected. She had spent most of her time thinking of where the battle should take place in order to keep it close to the city, but far away enough to keep it from suffering any damage.

Ruth's tense voice filled the bridge of the Blue Knight, which was now filled with vacant spots.

“Your highness, Satomi-sama, I've received reports that the deployment on the ground has proceeded as planned.”

“So we somehow made it in time…”

After glancing at Ruth who was sitting in the operator's seat, Theia leaned back on her own seat and let out a small sigh of relief. She didn't know if all the preparations would finish in time. But fortunately, all preparations were now complete, and now all that was left was to wait for the enemy.

“We're fortunate our opponent was Elexis.”

Looking at the monitor displaying the status on the ground, Koutarou made sure the last preparations were completed before sitting down on a nearby seat and turning to look at Theia.

“What do you mean?”

Ground Battle

“He's considering what happens after this battle, so he wouldn't attack until quite some time after Clan has left. If the opponents were just knights and soldiers, they might have rushed to attack already.”

Koutarou saw Elexis as a calm and calculating man. That's what his experiences back in the past Forthorthe had taught him. And since Elexis looked very similar to Dextro, a man who had given him a lot of trouble, he naturally became more cautious around him.

“That's our kind of opponent. Theia, don't get too obsessed with the victory in front of you. Against him, it's possible that we might not be able to fight anymore even if we win.”

“…”

Theia's eyes opened wide in surprise upon hearing Koutarou's words. But it wasn't because she didn't understand what he was saying. In fact, it was quite the opposite; it was because his words were so fitting for a knight, for a commander.

“What's wrong, Theia?”

“N-No… it's just… you're so calm… I…”

As far as Theia knew, Koutarou might have some experience fighting, but he shouldn't have any experience with war. This should be his first time experience something like this. Yet, Koutarou was calm, as if he was a veteran who had taken part in many wars before.

Oh crap… But it's not like I can hide it in this kind of situation…

That was when Koutarou realized that his behavior was very unfitting for a high school student. But since he couldn't go back to acting like a student he decided to try and cover it up.

“After fighting so many times, I'll start thinking too you know.”

“…You have a point. Sorry for saying something so strange. Please forget it.”

Fortunately, Theia didn't say anything else. She had too many things to worry about that she didn't have the time to think about Koutarou's behavior.

“Your highness, Satomi-sama, there's movement on the ground.”

And thanks to Ruth's report, Theia completely forgot about Koutarou's behavior as tension returned to her expression. Koutarou did the same.

“What happened?”

“We've lost the signals of two of the unmanned scouts patrolling the outside of the operation area.”

“If it's two it means it wasn't an accident or a wild animal! Theia, they're here!”

“Yes!”

The next moment, the previously quiet bridge turned very noisy. All kinds of information started being displayed on the monitors and an alarm rang out as the artificial intelligence gave them a message.

“Just before the signal to the scouts were lost, they detected a weak space quake! It seems the forces on the ground are receiving support from the fleet in orbit!”

By support, Ruth meant it in the same way that Theia and Ruth used the Blue Knight to summon weapons. Elexis had summoned a weapon to destroy the unmanned scouts.

“So that's how you're doing it, Elexis!”

“What do you mean?”

Ground Battle

“Elexis is planning on attacking from the ground and space at the same time!”

“I see. If we leave them be, the ground forces will be wiped out!”

Theia picked up on Elexis's plan after Koutarou.

The Blue Knight had currently reduced its power output and was pretending to be an asteroid orbiting the planet. That would make finding it difficult, but Elexis had chosen to lure it out. By summoning weapons and destroying the two scouts, he was sending them a message that if the Blue Knight doesn't come out, the three ships would support the forces on the ground. While they might have a chance against just the ground forces, with the support of the ships, the girls on the ground wouldn't stand a chance. Which meant that they wouldn't be able to protect Elfaria. It was a situation where Theia and the others had to show themselves.

“Ruth-san, where is the enemy fleet?!”

“It's currently being calculated!”

Ruth busily moved her hands and operated her panel. She was trying to locate the enemy fleet by tracking from where the signal was being sent as weapons was being transferred. When sending weapons back and forth, a message using gravitational waves was required. Using the data from the two unmanned scouts and from the Blue Knight, Ruth was trying to specify the origin. While she didn't know what was being sent, she knew the strength and direction of the communication, and from there she would be able to calculate the source location.

“I've found it, the three ships are all on the far side of the moon!”

Ruth displayed her results as a hologram. As she did, even Koutarou could understand Elexis's intentions.

“I see. From this position, they could fight without holding back!”

Observing what was happening on the far side of the moon was impossible from Earth, which was where the fleet of three ships had set up position. From there, they could fight to their hearts’ content without being discovered by the people on Earth. The only problem were the satellites, but because there were so few satellites capable of observing the far side of the moon, it wouldn't be hard to deal with them using Forthorthe's technological advantage.

“Blue Knight! Release camouflage. Set the generator output to the maximum! Enter a lunar orbit using a short warp!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Upon hearing Ruth's report, Theia ordered the Blue Knight to move. It was obvious that this was a trap, but they had no choice but to walk into it.

“Theia, bring out my armor! I'll control the Blue Knight's hull!”

Koutarou's armor was originally one of the devices used to control the ship. By wearing the armor and moving, the ship would replicate those motions. While the Blue Knight was a warship, it had the shape of a person, which it made it possible to change the direction of the weapons and boosters. This was a characteristic unique to the Blue Knight.

“Wait, Koutarou! You should head for the surface!”

However, Theia shook her head at Koutarou's offer. In a three vs one fight, it would be hard to win without making use of the Blue Knight's unique characteristic, but despite knowing that, Theia wanted Koutarou to head towards Earth to help the people on the ground.

“What do you mean?! Then you two will—”

Ground Battle

“Listen! It will take some time even for the Blue Knight to reach the far side of the moon! And I don't want our people on the ground annihilated before that! So you head for the surface!”

By bending space-time to move, which was also called warping, it was possible to reach the far side of the moon in an instant. But since they would just end up getting shot down if they dropped out of warp in the middle of the three ships, they would need to do so a distance away to avoid being focused down right away. Which meant that after the warp, they would need to use normal means to move to the far side of the moon, which would take time. And if the people on the ground were annihilated during that time, there would be no point. That's why Theia wanted Koutarou to head to the surface to buy some time.

“…I understand. Be careful, Theia.”

Koutarou endured his feelings of worry and decided to listen to her instructions.

“I know. I won't try to push for a win. I'll just run around while jamming their communications.”

Theia had said she would only be running around, but in truth that would be difficult to pull off. Koutarou knew it was dangerous as well. However, they both knew it was necessary, so they didn't discuss the matter any further.

“Ruth-san, I'll leave Theia to— wait, I don't need to tell you that.”

“No, I'll carve your words into my heart.”

As Ruth said that, the floor of the bridge opened, and a blue armor standing upright rose from below. After putting it on, Koutarou would head for the surface.

“…Koutarou before you go, say something to us.”

“Something? Like what?”

Koutarou replied to Theia while sliding into the armor that had just opened for him. The armor closed automatically and started making adjustments. The armor's motors started up, and changed the position of the armor's joints to take the load off of Koutarou. It was the usual startup process.

“Anything that will raise our morale.”

“You make it sound so easy, but that's the hardest part.”

“Just say something.”

Theia knew that this might be the last time they ever see each other, that's why she at least wanted to hear Koutarou's words one last time. She didn't care if the words themselves were pointless, as she only cared for the feelings they carried.

“Theia, once this is over, I'll play games with you for as long as you like.”

“…Now that you've said it, I won't let you go back on your word.”

Theia got to hear exactly what she wanted. The many feelings put into those words brought tears to her eyes. However, Theia held them back and smiled in return.

“Yeah. And Ruth-san.”

“Yes.”

“Think of something you want. Once this battle is over, I'll listen to any request you have.”

“Any?”

“Yes.”

“…I understand. I have a very special request, so I'll pick that one.”

Ground Battle

Tears formed in Ruth's eyes, but she couldn't show weakness before a battle, so she wiped them away and braced herself.

“…That's unfair. Why do I get games, while Ruth gets anything? You're too kind to just Ruth. I demand you correct this disparity.”

“Of course. Who do you think you are?”

Koutarou smiled wryly as he headed for the bridge's exit. He would use a small lifeboat to head down to Earth. And was outside of the bridge.

“I'm your princess! Treat me with more care!”

“Then you already know.”

“I don't.”

“Stupid.”

After exiting the bridge, Koutarou turned around to face Theia and Ruth one last time.

“…Theia, you have the right to request anything from me whenever you please.”

“Tha…”

Theia was shaken up by Koutarou's words, and her expression greatly distorted. Because she was too surprised, she completely forgot what she was about to say. But Theia only remained motionless for an instant. Noticing that the sliding doors leading out of the bridge were about to close, Theia desperately called out to Koutarou.

“Then you better come back to me!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

With those words as his last, the door closed and hid Koutarou.

“Isn't that great, your highness?”

After the door closed, Ruth smiled at Theia. However, Theia herself dropped her slender shoulders.

“…I should have said something more encouraging…”

Theia had seen Koutarou off by saying something selfish. Theia regretted her actions.

“Fufu… you can just say them when you meet again.”

“That's true… If we meet, I'll do just that.”

Theia showed a small smile and narrowed her eyes.

Since she was about to jump into a trap of her own volition, chances are that she wouldn't get that chance.

But thanks to that, Theia found a reason for why she had to win no matter what.

She would struggle and fight to meet with Koutarou once more and say something more princess-like.

A strong determination filled Theia's small chest.

Part 2

As Koutarou was starting his re-entry into the atmosphere, the battle on the ground was about to commence. And that information was sent to Elfaria, who was with Harumi.

“Harumi, the battle is about to start. Sadly, this is as much as I can help.”

Clan, who had given Harumi the news, positioned her ship, the Cradle, in the sky and observed the battlefield. But regardless of how well the Cradle was able to conceal its appearance, chances were high that once the battle started, any enemy too close would be able detect it. She would cut off her communications and take a more elevated position.

“Thank you very much, Clan-san. I'll see you later.”

“I'll be praying for your victory.”

“Yes, thank you very much.”

After Harumi thanked Clan for a second time, she cut the call. After operating her bracelet and terminating the call on her end as well, Harumi turned back to Elfaria.

“Your majesty Elfaria, it seems the battle is about to start.”

“I see…”

Elfaria looked out the window. Harumi and Elfaria were inside of a small cottage in the mountains. Because the cottage was in the middle of a thick forest, all that could be seen through the window was a dim forest. But Harumi knew that Elfaria wasn't looking at the trees; she was looking towards Kiriha and the others, far away, on the other side of all these trees. She was worried for those helping her.

“To think I would make people completely unrelated to me fight in my stead…”

Elfaria deeply regretted the situation she was currently in. Because she had spoken for the disarmament of the army, she had forced unrelated people to fight. Moreover, that included several young girls. Though it couldn't be helped, Elfaria couldn't find it in her to accept it.

“Your majesty, please don't say something so lonely. We might not know about Forthorthe, but we know of Theiamillis-san. She is a very wonderful girl and a precious friend. And your majesty is Theiamillis-san's mother. That's all the reason we need to stake our lives.”

“Harumi… but…”

“Even then, your majesty won't admit that we are Theiamillis-san's friends?”

Well aware that she was talking to the empress of a country, Harumi spoke her mind without flinching.

If I knew the current day Forthorthe well, I might not have been able to say this…

What Harumi knew of was the past Forthorthe that had been used as a setting for the play. She had memorized every detail of that setting, but she had no knowledge of the current Forthorthe. Because of that, she thought of Elfaria as Theia's mother, rather than an empress, allowing her to talk about how she really felt. At the same time, she knew that what she was saying was really bold, and couldn't help but find it funny.

“Harumi, you…”

Despite the serious discussion, Harumi had a gentle and happy smile. Seeing Harumi like that, Elfaria's impression of Harumi changed.

The conviction in her words… Her dignified behavior and elegant gestures… She is far too well made for a common girl… This girl really is…

Ground Battle

Harumi was a timid girl, but in a crisis, something inside of her would surface. Elfaria felt like that something was just too noble and beautiful. It was as if Harumi had been possessed by a princess.

“I'm sorry. That was rude of me… I'm sorry.”

Misinterpreting Elfaria’s stumbling for words as denial, Harumi apologized and lowered her head. She regretted getting too carried away.

“That's not true, Harumi. I was just moved thinking about what great friends Theia has made.”

Elfaria smiled at Harumi. There were no lies in Elfaria's words. She really felt like Theia had been blessed with wonderful friends. However, because they were so great, she started worrying for a different reason. They were complex feelings for a mother who wanted her daughter to be happy.

“Really? Hearing you say that makes me happy.”

“That's why I hope everyone will stay safe…”

“It will be okay. I'm sure everyone will return safely.”

“…You're so strong, Harumi.”

“I'm a girl after all… Weren't you the same in the past, your majesty?”

“That's true. I'll believe in those strong feelings of the past and wait.”

“Yes.”

But that was as long as the two could smile.

An explosion could be heard in the distance. The battle had finally begun.

Part 3

A blinding light appeared in the corner of the monitor Clan was staring at. The image moved, positioning the light in the center of the screen and zooming in. What was being displayed was an explosion and dust being kicked up into the air. It was a sign that an attack using some kind of weapon had been performed.

“…It's finally started…”

Clan was sitting in the bridge of the Hazy Moon and hastily operated a panel, giving orders to the Cradle currently positioned above the battlefield. While she couldn't help any more than that, she wanted information of what would happen in the worst case scenario. Clan activated all of the Cradle's sensors and attempted to confirm the situation. Data sent from the Cradle was processed and appeared as images on the monitor, one after the other.

“Your majesty…”

“Your highness, be safe…”

For each time an image appeared, the whispering voices in the bridge increased. Clan wasn't the only one in the Hazy Moon's bridge. A portion of the civilians that had saved Theia were in the bridge as well. They feared for the safety of Elfaria and Theia and pleaded with Clan to be present on the bridge on the condition that they didn't get in her way. Clan approved of their plea, and as a result, a dozen or so men and women were worriedly looking at the monitor.

Honestly, I'm envious, Theiamillis-san…

The past Clan most likely would have chased them off the bridge. But now, not only did she let them stay, but she also felt envious of Theia. If Clan was in the same position as Theia, would the citizens worry like this? Clan didn't have the confidence to say yes, and that proved that she was lacking as a princess. The situation made Clan remember how foolish she had been.

“There's no need to worry, everyone. Theiamillis-san and the others are strong. And in the worst case scenario, the Hazy Moon will come to the rescue. So you can continue watching at peace.”

Clan was now a lot different than she had been in the past. That's why whether the citizens would worry for her or not would gradually change.

“Princess Clariossa… We are grateful for your consideration.”

“T-That's only obvious. You are all citizens of Forthorthe, and I am its princess.”

A glimpse of that change could already be seen. The people bowing to Clan proved it. But since Clan was unused to dealing with others, she was unable to notice even that.

Part 4

The explosion in question had happened in a place a short distance away from where the scouts had been destroyed. The enemy was getting closer to where Elfaria and Harumi were hiding. It had been caused by a trap that had been placed beforehand.

“…As expected, it seems they can't detect these traps. But it seems they're aware that Elfaria-dono is hiding in this region… I can't make light of my foes.”

Kiriha was using explosives as traps.

Due to Forthorthe's sensors, simple bombs would be detected. And after some consideration, Kiriha decided to use talismans with explosion magic cast on them as a trigger for the main explosive, dynamite. It was a completely non-metallic bomb. As the enemy approached, the explosion magic would go off, which in turn set off the dynamite. It was a highly efficient and powerful bomb that couldn't be detected by Forthorthe's sensors.

On top of that, the bombs served as indicators of where the enemy was located. Thanks to these bombs, Kiriha was able to tell that the enemy was getting closer. So Kiriha and the others hurried in the direction of the explosion and set up a defensive formation.

“I can't make anyone out yet…”

Shizuka was staring into the forest, squinting with her eyes. Shizuka had the best eyesight out of anyone here, but with it being night, Shizuka couldn't spot any approaching enemies.

“That's right, won't you be able to see them now, Sanae-chan?”

“No, they're still too far off to see clearly, but I can feel a cloud of hostility.”

Sanae could see the auras of the enemies on the other side of the forest. Though because the forest itself had a thick aura to it, Sanae couldn't clearly see through it. But she could feel hostility coming from many people, moving together as a group.

“How does it look?”

“There's one big cloud in the front. And to its right, there's a small cloud. There might be more, but I can't tell from this distance.”

“Which means that at a minimum there's a main force and a detachment… Sanae, continue looking and let me know if there's a change.”

“Okay.”

Based on all the information she had gotten, Kiriha made adjustments to her plan. Knowing that the enemy had split up into at least two groups, Kiriha couldn't just leave it be.

“Yurika.”

“What is it?”

“Take three of my subordinates with you and stop the detachment of forces moving to our right. I don't want to let them do as they please.”

“Me?!”

Yurika's eyes shot wide open. She had just assumed that she would be following someone's orders, so being given soldiers and told to go fight separate from the rest was completely unexpected.

“Yes. There's no one else with as varied a power as you. You're the only one I can ask.”

If it was just about offensive power, or overall fighting capabilities, then Theia and Shizuka respectively were in a league of their own.

But the only one that could adapt to any situation was a magician like Yurika. It was an excellent ability for operating on her own.”

“I-I don't have any confidence…”

“Kiriha-san, this is too much for Yurika. Should I go instead?”

“She's right! Maki-chan is much better at attacking than me!”

Darkness Rainbow specialized in the misuse of magic. In other words, this sort of surprise attack was their forte. That was why Maki had offered to take Yurika's place.

“No, I'll need you to confuse the enemy's main force. Yurika will have to go.”

“No waaay~~”

However, Kiriha was set on using Yurika. Since Maki specialized in mind manipulation, she was vital for dealing with the larger force. And because of her specialization, she was less adaptable than Yurika. In Kiriha's mind, only Yurika could do this.

“You can do it, Yurika.”

“Sanae-chan, please don't make it sound so easy.”

“You only need to drive them away, so go give it your all.”

“Regardless of what we think, they are coming with the intent to kill us!”

“Then will you just wait here without doing anything? Once Koutarou gets here, he'll be really angry.”

“…Uhh~~, I-I'll do my best…”

Since Yurika is a coward, she was hesitant at first, but once she realized a future more scary than death, she took three underground soldiers with her and vanished into the forest.

“Without Koutarou, Yurika is useless, isn't she?”

“Will Yurika-chan be okay?”

“Maybe I really should have gone instead…”

“We can't afford to say that. The enemies coming our way won't be easy either. Shizuka, Sanae, get up front. Maki come with me.”

There were five girls from room 106 here. Each of them were given three subordinates from the underground to back them up. As a result, five squadrons had been made. As the commander, Kiriha would make use of them to produce the most favorable results. Currently, Yurika squad was sent out to suppress the enemy's detachment force. Shizuka, skilled in close combat, and Sanae, capable of strengthening and mid-range attacks, were sent to the front to attack the enemy's main force. Maki and Kiriha would take up position in the rear and were in charge of long-range attacks and distractions using magic.

I just hope Theia-dono's absence won't affect us too much…

Kiriha had plenty of matters she was concerned with. However, she wasn't in a situation where she could whine. They had to win no matter what. If they didn't, the future they desired would never come.

Part 5

A young man wearing a white suit was standing in the middle of the forest at night. That alone was already a bizarre sight, but what made it even more bizarre were the men wearing black combat uniforms surrounding him.

“Elexis-sama, the vanguard has come in contact with the enemy. The battle has begun.”

“Despite that, it's been awfully quiet since the first explosion.”

“Neither side must want to be found by the people of this planet.”

“I guess I'm the only one who wants to stand out then.”

Listening to the report from his subordinate, Elexis smiled wryly as he looked at his own clothes. His pure white suit stood out even in the dark of the night. He was easy to spot even from a fair distance away.

“The weapons our enemies are using are even more covert than ours.”

“They're not weapons from princess Theiamillis… which means there can't be that many of them. Somewhere around 20 to 30 I would wager.”

Being a fair distance away from the city, the laser and beam weapons that Elexis's forces were using wouldn't produce enough sound to attract any attention from unwanted bystanders. Despite that, if his enemies were using even more covert weapons, then that was practically the same as announcing that they had no chance in terms of sheer power. Because of that, it was likely that the enemy force was smaller than Elexis's forces.

“However, there are several powerful people amongst them. We have already taken some damage.”

“Mmm, that's more like it…”

Hearing that there were several powerful people in the enemy force, Elexis showed a joyful smile.

“Is there a boy using a knight's sword amongst those powerful enemies?”

“I have received no such reports.”

“I see…”

Not getting the answer he'd hoped for, Elexis's shoulders dropped. He looked like a child that had been stood up by a friend. Because that appearance was so different from his normal energetic and spirited behavior, the soldiers around him were a little confused.

“What should we do?”

“I'll leave it to you. Since we have the numerical advantage, we'll probably be fine if we just hold back and corner them using 'that.'”

Elexis gave instructions as if he was bored. Since his 'friend' hadn't appeared, he would proceed according to plan. It would be a boring result, and Elexis wouldn't even need to give his troops any more instructions.

“Understood.”

“But if the boy with the knight sword appears, don't just carelessly attack, report to me instead. I'll face him.”

“Is he that dangerous?”

“That boy is like a living joke.”

Ground Battle

“I'll take it to heart… Let's go! Don't let the vanguard have all the fun!”

With the commander at the front, the men in black combat uniforms advanced, leaving Elexis and a few soldiers that were his bodyguards.

“…Hurry up, Koutarou-kun. I'm getting tired of waiting.”

Elexis looked up into the sky. The stars were twinkling brightly, but the star he was looking for was nowhere to be found. The blue shooting star he wished for was still far away.

Ground Battle

Part 6

Yurika's surprise attack had been a success.

Since she was a magician, it was easy for her to sneak up on the Forthorthe soldiers without being noticed. Her attack was splendid as well, as she knocked three soldiers unconscious with her first attack.

“Kya! Kya! Kya!”

The problems came after that.

The enemy spread out after being attacked, meaning the only ones she had managed to defeat were those first three soldiers. However, those three still had seven more companions, and after Yurika's attack, they began their counter attack and beams rained down on Yurika.

“Save— Save me, Satomi-san! Nooooo~~!”

The weapons the coup d'état army was using were far more powerful than the weapons on Earth. And due to their high numbers, they unleashed an offensive that went against common sense. Under such an intense counter attack, Yurika hurriedly retreated.

Fortunately, thanks to the three underground people providing covering fire, Yurika was able to dive into a trench before all of her defensive spells were broken through.

“I-I thought I would die…”

Still lying down in the trench, Yurika let out a sigh of relief. Out of the five layers of defensive spells she had cast beforehand, only one remained. If the trench had been a little further she might have been killed.

“Yurika-sama, the enemy is falling back.”

“R-Really?!”

Hearing the good news from one of the underground people, Yurika stuck her face up from the trench. And like she had been told, she saw the enemy falling back, taking the three unconscious soldiers with them.

“I hope they just leave like this…”

“The chance of that would be quite low.”

“I thought so…”

Tears formed in Yurika's eyes as she grabbed her cane. She was desperately suppressing her urge to run away in fear.

Yurika had heard that there would be 50 soldiers at most, so there was no way they would retreat after losing only three.

“And it looks like their teamwork is excellent…”

On top of that, the enemies didn't push forward; instead, after driving Yurika away they fell back with their unconscious companions. That proved how cautious they were and how much they trusted each other. It wouldn't be hard to imagine that their next attack would be far more dangerous.

“…Yurika fight, Yurika fight! Yurika fight!”

Yurika encouraged herself and cast spells in preparation for the next attack. She was unbearably scared, and if she could she would have run away. But if she escaped, her precious friends would be hurt, or maybe even die. The thought that she might wake up all alone in room 106

tomorrow scared her most of all. She would rather stand her ground and fight here than let that happen.

“Yurika-sama, the enemy is coming!”

“This time we'll use everything we've got! After that we'll fall back to the next trench!”

Mustering up her courage, Yurika gave directions to her three subordinates. One year ago, Yurika had strongly wished she was the only occupant of room 106, but now she desperately worked to avoid it.

“This is Yurika! Kiriha-san, can you hear me?! The surprise attack was a success and three people have been defeated! From here we'll be fighting for real!”

After shouting into her microphone, Yurika pointed the tip of her cane towards the approaching enemy soldiers and started her incantation.

“Poison Cloud, Effective Area Maximize!”

Yurika cast a spell that created a large poisonous cloud. Though the poison wasn't fatal, it was very effective for weakening several people. Yurika wasn't a big fan of this spell because she felt it wasn't very magical-girl-like, but she absolutely needed it for this battle. She had to stop the soldiers here no matter what, by using any means necessary.

Part 7

As Yurika's battle on the right flank began, Kiriha and the others in the center spotted the enemy. Since Kiriha and the others were hiding in trenches like Yurika was, the enemy soldiers didn't advance right away, but began concentrating their forces behind trees and rocks.

“Kiriha, they're about to start shooting.”

With the soldiers closing in, though still a fair distance away, the effect from the forest's aura lessened and Sanae was able to sense the enemy's intention to attack.

“…So it begins, huh. Maki, detonate the first through fifth.”

“Roger that. Transmitting to the first through fifth detonator cords.”

Maki repeated what she had been told and concentrated on her cane. This caused several of the bombs connected to the cane to detonate.

The muffled sound Maki could hear let her know that five bombs had exploded at the same time. The explosives that were detonated this time weren't very lethal. Kiriha figured that since her opponents were pros, they would find any other bombs placed to harm them even without a means to detect them. That's why Kiriha used these explosives to destroy the trees and rocks the soldiers were using as cover. With that, the chances of the explosives being found were low and the amount of explosives needed wouldn't stand out.

Having suddenly lost their cover, the soldiers stood in place with a blank look of surprise. And the lighting that had been placed beforehand lit their appearance up. With the enemy being exposed, lit up and blinded by the light, Kiriha didn't miss her chance to attack.

“Begin the attack! Fire!”

“Sanae-chan God Arrow!”

“Multiple Mind Blast – Target Option Sidewinder!”

“Spiritual energy armament safety released, target acquired Ho-!”

“Commencing fire Ho-!”

Under Kiriha's command, all of those in charge of ranged attacks opened fire as one.

Sanae was using a bow and arrow created from her own spiritual energy, Maki used magic to attack, and the haniwas and underground people used spiritual energy weapons. All of the attacks used spiritual energy. Since Forthorthe's scientific advancements were protecting the enemy soldiers, simple physical attacks wouldn't have much of an effect. At the same time, they couldn't block attacks using spiritual energy. That's why this choice was inevitable.

As a result, all of the weapons were nonlethal. Attacks using spiritual energy had almost no effect on the body. So having attacks that would instead attack the soul directly and remove their opponents freedom was something both the girls of room 106 and Kiriha's subordinates from the conservative faction were grateful for.

Knowing that their opponents wouldn't die when shot, everyone could open fire without any hesitation. With almost no mental strain attached, the preemptive strike worked as planned.

“Uwaa?!”

“Aghh!”

The coup d'état soldiers collapsed one after another. Including Kiriha, about a dozen people were attacking from a distance. And from this attack, seven of the coup d'état soldiers collapsed to the ground. Kiriha estimated there to be 14 soldiers in the front. Which meant that this one attack had cut the enemy force in half.

Ground Battle

“Don't cower, fire back! Destroy the lights!”

Seeing their companions collapse, the coup d'état soldiers took action. As expected from professionals, they quickly lowered their posture to make themselves harder to hit and returned fire. Their first target were the searchlights blinding them.

The coup d'état army were using rifles that shot out beams. Their accuracy was spot on and their power was high. The lights were destroyed in an instant. With that, the surroundings turned dark again, making it harder for Kiriha and the others to aim.

“Now it's my turn!”

In the moment that the lights were destroyed, Shizuka jumped into the midst of the enemy. While the soldiers were blinded by the light, she had snuck up on them and waited for her time to strike. She swung her arms and legs around, sweeping her enemies away like a small tornado.

“Uwaa?!”

“Ugh!”

And with that attack, several more soldiers fell.

“What's going on?!”

“An enemy snuck up on us!”

“Whoops!”

Shizuka looked like she was about to continue her attack, but she stopped and jumped into a nearby bush to escape. She didn't have much time to attack her enemies before they struck back. Once the lights had been destroyed, the soldiers would be practically blind until their eyes adjusted to the darkness. And Shizuka would need to retreat once they could see again.

The soldiers that had adjusted to the darkness the fastest fired beams into the bush Shizuka had jumped into.

“Oh how scary!”

However, since Shizuka had already escaped past the bush, the beams simply ended up scorching the bush and the ground.

“Now, Kiriha-san!”

Shizuka shouted into the microphone placed on her cheek. In the next moment, a dazzling light appeared behind Shizuka. It was a flash that Maki had created using magic. Almost all of the coup d'état army's vanguard were caught up in the flash. As a result, just as they had gotten adjusted to the darkness they were blinded again, rendering their night vision goggles useless.

Shizuka hadn't jumped into the midst of the enemy just to defeat them. She would gather all eyes on her so that the second flash would be as effective as possible. The flash lit up the soldiers for Kiriha and the others, allowing them to fire upon them once more.

“…Kiriha. Are you always thinking about vicious things like this?”

Firing arrows from her bow, Sanae asked Kiriha who was next to her. Several enemies easily fell prey to Kiriha's plan. Though they were using special powers like magic and spiritual energy, Sanae was amazed.

“No, only when I have too.”

Firing her spiritual energy rifle, Kiriha answered nonchalantly. In total, 15 soldiers had fallen. This was as good a preemptive strike would do.

“Right. Good… oh and Kiriha.”

Ground Battle

“Hmm?”

“Could you teach me some mischievous tricks I could pull on Koutarou later?”

“Very well.”

“Alright!”

“I'm back!”

That was when Shizuka returned. She was slightly out of breath, but had no serious injuries. The only injuries she had were scratches from her attack and retreat. Other than those, she was practically unharmed.

“It looks like everything went according to plan, Kiriha-san. A total of 15 people were knocked out.”

“It was a great success. This is thanks to Yurika doing her best over there. We should give her our thanks later.”

If it wasn't for Yurika's efforts, this result might not have been achieved. If the enemy's detachment had hit their flank as planned, then they wouldn't be in any position to attack.

Having gotten a better result than she hoped for, Shizuka smiled. Maki and Sanae did the same, and they let out a sigh of relief that everyone was okay. However, only Kiriha had a serious expression.

“A message from that Yurika.”

Kiriha touched her earphone. As she did, everyone could hear Yurika's voice in their own earphones. Her voice was desperate, and she was practically screaming.

“T-This is bad! Just like when Theia-chan brings out her weapons, a bunch of robots came out! Kyaaaaaaaaaaa!”

The last was an actual scream. And with that scream as her last, communication with Yurika was cut off.

“Yurika-chan?!”

“Yurika, hey Yurika!”

Shizuka and Sanae called out to Yurika in panic. However, they didn't get any reply.

“…The main show starts here. DKI will show how serious they are.”

Kiriha continued calling out to Yurika through her microphone, while looking in the direction of the enemy with a sharp glance. A strange spectacle was developing in front of her. Machines in the shape of people appeared from a black hole in the air. Their height and physique were the same as an adult male. Since they could use weapons and protection that people could, they didn't require any special equipment, making it very easy to field them.

They were Dragon Knight Industry's human-shaped, all-purpose robots, Motor Knights.

They were mechanical knights sent from the ships in space.

Part 8

As Kiriha and the others were facing off against a new threat, danger loomed for Harumi and Elfaria in their mountain cottage. Moments after the battle had started, unmanned scouts had been sent to look for Elfaria and Theia.

What is this strange feeling…?

Thanks to her senses strengthened by her awakening, Harumi could sense the unmanned scout. However, she wasn't aware of that and only felt a vague sense of anxiety.

“Is something the matter, Harumi?”

“Your majesty… All of a sudden, I started feeling restless… I feel like, it'll be dangerous at this rate… even though there's no way I could know that…”

Harumi tilted her head a couple of times as she explained to Elfaria. She was confused as to why she suddenly started feeling so anxious for no apparent reason. She had only recently awakened as a magician, so she didn't know that her magical powers could affect her.

Is she just imagining it? Or is it the Silver Princess's powers?

Since Elfaria had her suspicions about Harumi, she began thinking in that way. In order to confirm her suspicions, she came up with a proposal for Harumi.

“Harumi, you can use magic, can't you?”

“Yes. I only just became able to though…”

“How about you use a spell to search the surroundings then? If you were just imagining it, then the anxiety would settle, but if danger really is approaching it would help us as well.”

“I see, it's just as you say. I'll give it a try.”

Harumi agreed with Elfaria's proposal and decided to use her magic.

What should I use…?

Harumi had a wide repertoire of magic she could use. She had to pick an apt spell to scan the area for enemies. While Yurika or Maki would make up their minds right away, a beginner like Harumi had a tough time picking a spell.

“What's the matter?”

Seeing that Harumi had stopped moving, Elfaria called out to her. Harumi blushed and honestly spoke out her reason.

“I… uhm… was just thinking what spell I should use…”

“That's a good point… Since the enemy is from Forthorthe, it might be a good idea to look for metal. The tools that soldiers use usually have metal in them.”

Weapons, armor, communication devices, cars, planes and even spaceships. Pretty much all modern technology makes use of metal in one way or another. As civilizations developed, so did their use of metal, and the two sides formed a solid bond. That's why scanning the area for metal should reveal any enemies.

“Metal… I'll give it a try!”

Harumi knew of a spell to detect metal. More precisely, it was a spell to look for rocks, but it was effective for refined metal as well. Harumi clasped her hands in front of her chest and closed her eyes to focus. She then called for Signaltin's power and chanted a spell in ancient Forthorthe.

Ground Battle

“…Gather, spirits of earth. Kneel before me and display the power behind your name. Shout, lineage of earth!”

Harumi flawlessly spoke her incantation as if it was a song. Since it was a complex language, not even Elfaria, who was also an archaeologist, could pronounce it this well. Harumi spoke as if she had been taught the language since birth.

The ancient language… used in rituals in the past Forthorthe… Would she be able to have such perfect pronunciation just from having memories of it…?

Elfaria had heard that Harumi had the Silver Princess's memories from Clan. However, Elfaria didn't think that that was all there was to it. She couldn't shake the suspicion that there was something else hidden within Harumi.

“…Alright.”

As Elfaria was thinking about that, Harumi completed her spell. In her mind, she could feel the presence of all kinds of metal around her. The framework of the cottage, the nails holding down the floorboards, the cables running inside of the walls. The TV with its various use of metal was like cotton candy.

“What… is this I wonder? …Something is… flying…?”

As Harumi's sense expanded past the cottage, she sensed something strange. A clump of metal the size of a volleyball was moving around a hundred-something meters away. Being in a mountain, moving metal stood out like a sore thumb.

“It's not just one… Two… no, three?”

“Did you find something?”

“Yes. I don't know what it is, but there are three lumps of metal about this size flying around.”

Even if Harumi had said that they were about the size of volleyballs, Elfaria wouldn't understand, so Harumi spread her hands out to show the size.

“…Those are most likely scouts. They must be searching for me and Theia.”

“Oh no! At this rate, they'll find us!”

Even as they were talking, the three scouts were approaching Harumi and Elfaria's cottage. At this rate, they'd soon find the cottage and scan the inside.

“Let's escape right away!”

“That's impossible. The scouts use sound, heat, optics and radar to find their targets. If we exit this building, we'll be found right away.”

The only reason they hadn't been found yet was because the cottage was preventing the scouts from seeing and hearing them. But if they went outside, there would be nothing concealing them. Just like Harumi had quickly detected the scouts, Harumi and Elfaria would soon be spotted in this area void of much else.

“It's safer to stay hidden like this.”

“But, if those things come inside…”

If Elfaria fell into enemy hands, the efforts of the girls, who were in the middle of a battle even now, would go to waste. Harumi racked her brain to find a way to protect Elfaria.

If we leave this cottage we'll be found right away… That said, if we stay here, they'll eventually show up… If we destroy the scouts, the enemy will show up to investigate… Then we'll have to wait it out inside the cottage, but… would that work against alien technology?

Ground Battle

The scouts would eventually show up. And before they did, Harumi would need to think of a way to protect Elfaria. To Harumi who had lived a completely normal life up until now, that was an incredibly difficult problem to solve.

Part 9

The scout found the cottage as it was surveying its assigned area.

The scout determined that the cottage was a high priority target for investigation and called over the other scouts. Since it was obvious that people might be hiding in buildings, the scouts were programmed to prioritize their search around buildings. Once the three scouts had gathered, their roles were split up and one would stay outside to survey the entire building while the other two would head inside.

The two scouts used lasers to cut open the wooden wall and entered without a sound. Inside, they found signs of people having been there recently; they had found a boiler which was still hot. Since this was an alien culture, it took some time for the scouts to determine what it was, but it was clear evidence that people were inside. Based on the current circumstances, the chances of it being their target was high. The scouts increased their priority of this investigation and decided on doing a more detailed investigation.

“Ahahaha.”

That was when a woman's laughter could be heard from a different room. Since the scouts had been given the order to find two women, one of them entered the hallway in response to the voice.

Having passed through the door and entered the hallway, the scouts heard a sound from two rooms over. They were the sounds of several men and women talking.

Hearing a woman's laughter and voice, the artificial intelligence's interest deepened further and moved towards the door in question. Once at the door, the scouts confirmed that there were people on the other side through the use of its heat sensors. But it couldn't get any more details than that, so one of them extended a cable from its body and squeezed it through the opening in the door.

The cable contained a camera and microphone, and by sticking it through the gaps, it could be used to scan the other side.

“That looks so great, I want to visit a place like that…”

Inside the room were two black haired women. One was a girl in her teens and the other was a woman in her forties. Only the girl and woman were in the room. They were sitting on a sofa and looking at an ancient video device, a TV. Voices talking came from the video device and the girl and woman were energetically looking at it. The two had cups in their hands with steam rising from them.

The scout that had observed them put all of the information it had gathered together and came up with a logical explanation.

First, it connected the heat from the boiler to the contents of the cup. They were drinking something that required hot water. Next was the laughter from before. It belonged to the girl and woman who were excitedly watching the TV. The talking voices came from the video device.

Having logically explained everything, the scout lost interest in the two women. They were local residents, relaxing and watching their video device. That was the artificial intelligence's conclusion. There was a possibility of them using disguises, but according to their analysis of their faces, they were completely different people.

The scouts didn't have the time to bother with some local residents. After retracting its cable, the scout began searching other rooms. However, there were no signs of other people in the cottage, and the scouts determined that their targets were not here. Upon reaching that conclusion, the two scouts returned to the door to the room where the girl and woman were. They were going to leave through the same hole they had entered, and continue working on their assignment.

However, all of a sudden an alarm rang from the two scouts. They had been operating covertly until now, but after that alarm they gave up all efforts on stealth.

Hearing that alarm, the two inside of the room stood up in surprise. Startled by the sudden sound, the two stared at the door.

The next moment, the scout broke through the door and entered. Surprised by the two balls of metal, their expressions grew stiff.

But in the next moment, the scouts passed through the room and crashed through the glass window and escaped out of the cottage. After joining up with the scout on the outside, they sped off into the distance.

“Just what is…”

The girl with black hair looked out the window. There she saw the starry sky, and a particularly large blue meteor.

“A meteor…?”

The meteor was obviously artificial. The blue light it was emitting was not caused by friction with the atmosphere, but was energy protecting it. With a long tail, the meteor headed for forest, and the scouts followed after it.

“Satomi-kun has descended…”

The black haired girl, Harumi, realized what the meteor was almost right away, and why the scouts had left. They had noticed Koutarou descending from the Blue Knight, and prioritized Koutarou over surveying this area. It also meant that Harumi and Elfaria had successfully managed to deceive the scouts.

“W-We're saved… When they came into the room, I thought it was over…”

Ground Battle

Harumi was released from all the tension that had built up in her body and sat down on the spot. However, her heart was still beating rapidly, and more time would be needed for her to calm down.

“Your plan worked, Harumi.”

The other black haired woman approached Harumi.

“Your majesty…”

As Harumi looked up at that woman, her outline temporarily disappeared and she turned into a different woman. The new woman had an expensive looking dress and a crown on her head. She was empress Elfaria, one of the two the scouts were looking for.

“I was surprised when you said I had to hide because the scouts were coming, but your plan was a complete success.”

“I'm glad it went okay.”

Seeing Elfaria's calm smile, Harumi was finally able to smile herself. And remembering what she had done, she felt relieved that she had survived the crisis.

Upon realizing that the scouts were approaching, Harumi's first thought was to hide somewhere in the cottage. However she soon gave up on that idea. The scouts were using Forthorthe's advanced science. She didn't think she could completely fool all of their sensors. For instance, if their temperature were tracked, they wouldn't be able to hide. In order to make the cottage look empty, they wouldn't just need to hide, but also hide all traces that they had been here. Doing that would have been difficult, even with the help of magic. So Harumi came up with the bold plan of not hiding at all.

Harumi was hoping that doing that would trick the scouts to believing that they were completely unrelated.

Using that plan, they wouldn't need to hide their traces. It would be a lot easier to change their appearance than try to erase all traces of themselves. But on the other hand, it also had the risk that if the scouts took their time to collect data, they might find out that it was actually Elfaria. It might even be possible to identify her just by analyzing their temperature data. In short, Harumi's plan was a big gamble.

Fortunately, the scouts didn't gather data that detailed. That was because they were pressed for time and because they didn't want to be found by local residents. And the fact that they detected Koutarou approaching was a big factor as well. Thanks to that, the scouts easily gave up on Harumi and Elfaria and left the cottage.

Thanks to Harumi's gamble, Elfaria was safe. Like Elfaria said, Harumi's plan was a big success.

“But, I still can't believe it went this well…”

“Everything is like that. No matter how hard it might look, when you give it a try, it might be surprisingly easy.”

However, Harumi still didn't feel like she had come out on top. Since she had lived like a normal girl up until now, she couldn't imagine herself being as successful as the characters that appeared in movies or plays.

“Thank you Harumi. You were a big help.”

“Ah, n-no, not at all!”

All Harumi could feel right now was relief that everything had ended safely, and embarrassment from being thanked by her friend's mother.

Ground Battle

Ground Battle

Part 10

Like Kiriha had expected, once the humanoid robotic soldiers appeared, the coup d'état army gained the upper hand in the battle. The robotic weapons called Motor Knights didn’t just have more agility and power than humans, they were also a lot tougher. Because of that, the coup d'état army used these robots to replace their fallen allies and attacked Kiriha and the others. In total, 15 robots had appeared, the same amount as the number of people Kiriha and the others had defeated. However, their strength was beyond the soldiers that had fallen. Because of their strength, the robots were using the largest handheld weapons the coup d'état army had. Despite that, their movements were agile, and they could take a few hits. What was even more problematic was that the robots didn't have souls, meaning spiritual energy weapons could only deal about as much damage as a normal weapon. Usually these kinds of opponents were defeated using numbers, but that would be difficult for Kiriha and the others. To them, these were very troublesome opponents.

Of course, these robots had their own weaknesses. They stood out too much to be used in urban areas, and their decision making wasn't as trustworthy as humans were. But if it was just a simple firefight, this wasn't a problem. Using communication to coordinate perfectly, the robots pressed on towards Kiriha and the others, step by step.

“W-What's up with these things?!”

Shizuka who was fighting in the frontlines let out a shout.

She had problems dealing with them in close combat. If it was just one at a time, Shizuka could easily defeat them, but once there were two or more of them, the situation changed entirely.

“T-This is just cheating! What am I supposed to do?!”

Forming a high-speed network to exchange information, it was possible for the robots to coordinate their attacks perfectly. Their coordination surpassed what humans were capable, and worked even in close combat, where coordination like that would be close to impossible. In other words, it was even possible for several robots to work together and unleash a combination punch.

As Shizuka was fighting against one robot, a second one would sometimes attack. A combination of supposedly three punches suddenly turned into four. There were also cases where punches that she threw should have hit, but were blocked instead.

With this, even a master like Shizuka couldn't do anything. It was like she was going up against a god of war. She was only still standing because Sanae had raised her physical abilities, but all she could do was block the enemy's attacks. What's more, her opponent wouldn't get tired or miss. It was obvious that she couldn't keep this up for long.

“You can do it, Shizuka! Show your guts!”

Sanae cheered at Shizuka while providing covering fire. She wasn't using a bow and arrow anymore, but instead was using poltergeist attacks like she did so in the past. Since the robots didn't have souls, attacks using pure spiritual energy had little effect. Sanae had no choice but to use poltergeist and send nearby objects flying towards the robots.

But as expected, Sanae was having problems too. There weren't that many objects lying around that would be useful for attacking. There were plenty of rocks, but the robots wouldn't so much as flinch if they were hit by that. Large rocks would do some damage, but the robots would swiftly dodge them. And because they were robots, Sanae couldn't use her abilities to read where they would go next. So even for Sanae, robots were tough opponents.

“Thunder Lance – Modifier – High Concentrate – Armor Piercing!”

Amongst them, only Maki was able to damage the opponent. Since she was a magician, she could adapt her way of fighting depending on the opponent. Maki concentrated her power to forcibly break through the robots' defenses and shoot electricity through the internal workings of the robots.

But knowing that Maki was a threat, the coup d'état army wouldn't simply leave her be. The human soldiers that had arrived at the battlefield as backup prioritized targeting Maki. Because of that, Maki had to deal with the onslaught of bullets and shells coming her way, and was unable to attack the way she pleased. Knowing that only Maki could deal with the robots, it wasn't that hard to limit her actions.

"…As expected, not having Theia-dono and Ruth hurts."

Kiriha bit her lips as she used her haniwas to protect Maki.

If Theia and Ruth had been here, they'd be able to launch a more powerful offensive. They could summon weapons from the Blue Knight, or bombard the battlefield with lasers directly from space, which would allow them to defeat a large amount of the robots. But right now, Theia and the Blue Knight were headed towards the far side of the moon in order to deal with the three ships over there. Since those ships were sending the robots in, that was something that had to be done.

And Theia's absence didn't just impact their offensive capabilities. Theia's strong willpower, her leadership that would bring them victory was absent as well. Kiriha had some talent as a commander too, but she was aware that she wasn't as good as Theia. Kiriha formed plans, while Theia stood at the front and executed them. That was how things had always played out until now. Theia was their shining beacon. With her now gone, they didn't know who to turn to.

"Everyone, hurry! Get to Kiriha-san and the others, quickly!"

That was when Yurika and her three subordinates jumped out of a bush to the right. Yurika sent the three out ahead of her while she would remain to buy them some time to escape.

Yurika's squad had been dealing with the coup d'état army's detachment up until now. As a result of just the four of them standing against the enemy forces, they were all wounded.

The three subordinates were already in a state where they couldn't continue fighting any longer, and one of them had taken an injury so severe it wouldn't be strange for her to die. The two who were relatively unharmed compared to the third one carried her towards Kiriha and the others.

And the one protecting them was Yurika, who had taken the least amount of damage. However, Yurika had a lot of bruises and scorch marks on her, so she was far from alright. But as long as she had something to protect, she would never fall back. She desperately bought time for the three subordinates who had been protecting her until now.

"Nijino Yurika, that's enough, hurry and get over here!"

Thanks to Yurika's efforts, the three subordinates managed to safely reach Kiriha and the others. The three of them collapsed into a trench, and seeing that, Kiriha called Yurika over.

"O-Okay!"

"Yurika-chan, hurry up Ho-!"

"We don't have much time Ho-!"

"Thank you, Karama-chan, Korama-chan!"

Yurika retreated while being protected by the haniwas. Before long, Yurika was able to reach Kiriha and the others. With a ragged breath, Yurika then posed a question to Kiriha.

Ground Battle

“Kiriha-san, how is it going here?! Is everyone okay?!”

“It's hard to say that they're okay. It might be better to fall back before we take any more damage.”

Kiriha and the others had prepared many defensive positions around the cottage where Harumi and Elfaria were hiding. One of them had now almost been overrun by the enemy. That's why they only had the option to fall back to another defensive position.

“Wait, Kiriha-san, if we retreat from here, the detachment to our right will be completely freed up! Sakuraba-san will be in danger!”

Maki objected to falling back. Since they had made several defensive positions, they could make use of more traps if they fell back to another one. However, it would also give their enemies a chance to regroup. And since they would also move closer to Harumi and Elfaria, it was dangerous to just fall back.

Ground Battle

Ground Battle

“I know! That's why we'll contact those two and have them—”

That was when a laser fired from one of the enemy robots pierced through Kiriha's shoulder. As Kiriha was occupied with the battle in its entirety, she revealed an opening, and the attack from the robot happened to overlap with that opening.

“Ugh.”

Kiriha's face distorted from the pain and she fell to one knee. Since her wound had been cauterized by the laser there was no blood, but she had lost her ability to move her right arm and she dropped her rifle.

“We're running, everyone! Yurika, use that villainous magic of yours or something!”

The moment Kiriha had been injured, Sanae instantly decided on a retreat. Sanae had felt that everyone's morale dropped when their leader, Kiriha, had been hurt. Though they might still be in danger if they fall back, they wouldn't be killed right away like they might if they stayed here. That was what Sanae's intuition told her, and in a rare display of leadership, she led the retreat.

“Kiriha, can you stand?!”

“I'm okay… Only my arm is hurt.”

Sanae put her palm over Kiriha's wound and poured spiritual energy into her. Once Shizuka got back, the two of them worked together to help Kiriha up. Immediately after that, a uniquely colored fog covered the battlefield. The fog was the poison and acid clouds that Yurika had created. The enemies were wrapped in the fog, took damage and had their view of the battlefield robbed from them. With that, the enemy soldier's attack was interrupted, but the robots were equipped with heat sensors and continued attacking.

“Then how about this! Fire Wall!”

Maki created a wall of flame between them and the poison cloud. With the heat from the flames, the robots heat sensors couldn't pick up any more people and their attack stopped as well, giving everyone a chance to escape.

“Now, everyone, hurry and go!”

Maki signaled her allies, and once they had moved out she retreated as well. But that was when the unthinkable happened.

In the center of Maki and her escaping allies, a big explosion suddenly occurred.

“Kyaaaaaaaa!”

The girls screamed out. The shockwave created by the blast sent them flying, and many of them were slammed into the ground and lost consciousness. The only one still conscious was Maki who had been bringing up the rear.

“…W-What just…”

Maki endured the pain and tried to get up, but the shockwave dulled her body and she was unable to move as she pleased. The only thing she could move was her head. She turned her head around and looked in the direction of the enemy behind her.

There she saw several robots; they had ignored the poison and acid clouds and the fire wall, and forcibly chased after them.

I see… They were all disposable… We were too naïve…

If their opponents had been human, Maki and the others probably could have escaped using that method, since pushing through poison and fire was nothing short of suicidal.

Ground Battle

However, their opponents this time had robots as well. Robots didn't hesitate to put themselves at harm's risk. And the commander didn't care for losing some robots. The only thing they were thinking about was eliminating Maki and the others. The robots ignored everything and pushed forward. Maki and the others hadn't predicted this strategy that humans could never pull off.

Will we die here…?

Maki couldn't move any more. As she realized her death was imminent, strength left her body. Despite being face to face with death, Maki didn't feel any fear. She knew what was scary wasn't death, but solitude. Since she was with her friends, she wasn't scared.

Satomi-kun… I'm sorry…

Her only regret was Koutarou. She felt deep regret about leaving Koutarou alone. But there was nothing she could do with her body unable to move.

I wanted to see you, one more time, before I died…

With that thought as her last, Maki's consciousness began drifting away. Her built up tension was all released and she was overcome with a large amount of mental fatigue. And because of the pain, she was unable to stay conscious.

A blue, light… Is that… Satomi-kun…?

Just as she was about to lose consciousness, Maki spotted a blue light. And in the center of that blue light was a boy wearing a blue armor. Seeing that, Maki felt content and lost consciousness. It didn't matter to her whether it was an illusion or the real deal.

Part 11

Most of the anger the boy called Satomi Koutarou had was usually directed at his own powerlessness. Because he was simple and his expressions were immediate, he would often look like he was angry, but it was actually rare for him to openly display anger.

However, at this time, Koutarou was very clearly angry. And it wasn't some half-assed anger either. His anger this time was about as fierce as when Alaia and Charl had been kidnapped.

“…Why can't you just leave us be… We just want to be close to one another…”

Koutarou was grasping Signaltin's handle in his hand. The metal of his gauntlet scratched against the handle creating a screeching noise, as if the screams in Koutarou's mind were leaking out.

After descending on the lifeboat, Koutarou used the coordinates he had gotten from Clan to head towards the battlefield. There, Koutarou saw his 20 companions lying on the ground, unable to move. Most of them were seriously injured and would die if left untreated. And amongst those 20 were the girls that were extra special to him. Kiriha, Sanae, Yurika, Maki, Shizuka. Each of them were struggling with their own solitude and sought after the warmth from others. They were his friends that supported each other. Koutarou couldn't lose them no matter what. If they weren't all smiling together, he would feel troubled. And now they all lay collapsed with life threatening injuries. That was something Koutarou could never forgive.

“…I'm glad you’re machines.”

Koutarou readied his sword. In front of him were 15 robots. It didn't matter how strong they were, as he would beat them down no matter what. He had to save his companions as quickly as possible.

“Because I don't think I could hold back right now.”

Koutarou was angry.

If the flaming anger in his eyes could be removed, the robots would surely have melted in an instant. That was just how intense his anger was.

A large amount of people were watching the battle progress on the monitor in the bridge of the Hazy Moon. They were the people who had helped Theia and Elfaria escape, so they were well aware of the meaning of this battle. That's why, when the girls collapsed, sobbing could be heard on the bridge. At this rate, it was only a matter of time before their beloved empress would fall into the hands of the coup d'état army.

“Who is that knight…?”

“I'm not sure… but he sure does look eccentric…”

However, when a lone knight appeared on the monitor, the people's appearance began to change.

The knight was wielding a knight's sword and wearing a knight's armor. It was a very classic knight that you'd only see on TV and in movies in this day and age. What stood out the most however, was the knight's youth and the color of his armor.

The knight was quite clearly an adolescent, still young enough to be called a child. He was just about princess Theiamillis's age.

And the armor he was wearing had a vivid blue color. It was a color rarely used by knights. Since it was a color a great knight of the past had used, it was rarely ever used by others out of respect and due to not wanting to be compared.

Ground Battle

“It's blue, so it has to be the Blue Knight! That's obvious!”

A young boy who was watching the monitor alongside the adults spoke what was on everyone's minds. If the armor was blue, it had to be the Blue Knight.

“The empress and princess are in trouble so he came to save them!”

“Child. Even if you call him the Blue Knight, he can't be 'that' Blue Knight. He's only wearing blue armor so he can stand out. He'll only end up losing.”

To the people of Forthorthe, the Blue Knight was a man of great meaning. The Blue Knight was a legendary hero from 2,000 years ago who was respected even now. But a legend was just a legend. There was no way the Blue Knight standing before them was the real one, the person on the monitor was just wearing a blue armor. He should just be a normal knight. Moreover, if he was a normal knight, he should have avoided using that blue color, so it seemed clear that this person was quite a show off. That wasn't the opinion of just the person who had spoken to the young boy, but rather the opinion of all the adults on the bridge.

“No way! That's the Blue Knight!”

However, the young boy believed that if the empress and princess were in trouble, the Blue Knight would appear. And after he defeated the bad guys, everything would have a happy ending. He was a legendary hero that the boy admired after all.

“He'll definitely win! There's no way the Blue Knight would lose to some robots that haven't even made any oaths!”

And just as the boy declared so with all his might, the knight in question unsheathed his sword and began moving. However, his speed was far too fast. To the people who were observing through the monitor, it was as if he had disappeared. In the next moment, he reappeared in a different place. He stood in place having swung his sword.

At the same time, three robots exploded in succession. They were the robots that should have been in the way of the knight.

“What?! Did that knight do that?!”

“There's no one else there, it has to be!”

“Those are the latest model robotic soldiers right?! And he destroyed three so easily?!”

The people on the bridge were taken back in surprise. They had been watching the fight all this time, so they knew just how strong those robots were. Yet, the knight wearing blue armor had destroyed three of them in one fell swoop. It was an unbelievable spectacle.

“See! I told you! He'll win! He's the Blue Knight!”

The boy was rejoiceful that he had been correct and turned back to look at the monitor. Rather than talking with the adults, it was more important for him to cheer on the Blue Knight.

“You can do it, Blue Knight! Beat those bad guys!”

As if the boy’s cheers reached him, the knight moved swung his sword once more, and another robot was destroyed. The sword’s sharpness was terrific as it severed the robot and its weapon in half.

“Could it be…”

At first, everyone had rejected the boy's words. But for each time a robot was destroyed, they began thinking that the boy had been correct. The knight's fight was so vivid that everyone thought of that legendary knight.

The Blue Knight, Reios Fatra Bertorion. The legendary hero and his trademark blue armor.

Ground Battle

“Fly! Fly, Blue Knight!”

However, at this point, there was only who truly believed so from the bottom of his heart.

Part 1

May 22, Saturday

Kiriha and the others were a poor match against the robots, but to Koutarou they were a perfect match. What Kiriha and the others were lacking in was pure attack power, which was what Signaltin specialized in. Moreover, while the robots were fast and had excellent cooperation, they didn't have any weapons that could break through Koutarou's armor. It was impossible for the robots to break through the two barriers consisting of bent space and magic. This was because the robots had been designed as all-purpose robots, and as a result, the weapons the robots used were mass produced. Compared to Koutarou who was only using items produced for him, the robots stood no chance. While they might look like her, the robots were nothing like what Maya had been. One could say that the robots were now in the same position Kiriha and the others had been just a moment ago. And if their opponent had been Koutarou instead, Kiriha and the others might have won with ease. It was kind of like a rock-paper-scissors born from their individual abilities.

“And that's five!”

Koutarou swung Signaltin and cut through a robot without the slightest bit of resistance. If his opponent had been human, Koutarou would have held back the power of his swing. However, he was currently not holding back in the slightest. Against machines, there was no problem for him to pour his everything into his attacks. On top of that, Koutarou was currently furious.

And just as Koutarou had locked on to the sixth robot–

“…As expected, the Motor Knights alone are no match for you.”

He could hear a familiar voice coming from behind the remaining ten robots. He then saw a giant made from steel reaching at least five meters in height.

“You're finally here, Elexis.”

“You remembered me. I'm happy, Koutarou-kun.”

The giant's head slid up a little while the armor on its chest slid down. On the other side of that wall of steel was a face Koutarou remembered. He was Ruth's former fiancé, and the CEO of DKI, Elexis Borannam. As if facing a friend, Elexis greeted Koutarou with a graceful and refined smile.

Ground Battle

Ground Battle

“I'm not happy… Looks like you've been doing as you please, Elexis.”

Koutarou stared at Elexis with a sharp glance. There was no way that Koutarou could remain calm when facing the man who was the reason the girls had been hurt. To him, the girls were like the sun, they were the light that lit up his every day. And now those girls were hurt and lay collapsed on the ground. It was as if Elexis had stolen the light from the world, and Koutarou couldn't forgive him.

“I didn't really wish to. Harming women is not elegant after all. However, it was needed to defeat you.”

“Me?”

“That's right. You are the biggest obstacle in the way of defeating her majesty Elfaria and princess Theiamillis. And most of all, I can't fulfill my objective if I can't defeat you.”

Elexis creating those robots and sending them at the girls had all been done to defeat Koutarou. From his experience in the past, Elexis considered Koutarou his top priority. If Elexis and the military tried to attack the empress and princess, Koutarou would get in the way. So in that case, defeating Koutarou first would lower the risk. That was Elexis's judgment on the situation.

“And you live by the good old code of chivalry. While I believe that spirit of yours is worth respect, when it’s time to attack you, targeting that first is effective. It'll be hard for you to win while protecting all of your friends.”

“So that's your plan…”

He was up against Elexis and the ten robots by his side. The remaining coup d'état soldiers that had been lying in wait until now advanced forward whilst avoiding Koutarou. They were targeting the collapsed girls in order to hold him back. Koutarou would need to defeat Elexis and the robots while preventing the soldiers' advance. In order to create this situation, Elexis had launched a large scale attack on the girls of room 106. Elexis had deployed a force larger than what Kiriha had foreseen because he was after Koutarou, not Theia or Elfaria. He didn't care if he left behind evidence if he was going to go up against Koutarou. Once he had eliminated Koutarou, he could slowly defeat Elfaria and Theia in a way that wouldn't leave behind any evidence.

“Now, let's begin, Koutarou-kun. You don't have much time left.”

“…Even after 2,000 years, you're still my most troublesome opponent, Dextro…”

Koutarou strengthened his grip on Signaltin and pointed the tip towards the giant Elexis was in.

Part 2

The battle was progressing in Elexis's favor. The reason for that was the giant that Elexis was using.

“Kuh, it's tough!”

“Of course. I made it just to defeat you after all.”

Despite the fight having just started, Koutarou's armor had already taken a lot of damage. Koutarou was stuck on the defensive and under a fierce attack. Because Koutarou was wearing his armor, he was stronger than the last time they had fought. Yet, he was at a disadvantage. That was just how strong Elexis was.

“And these robots' movements are completely different from before!”

“It took a lot of time before I was able to get them like this.”

The steel giant Elexis was riding was a new model that had been overhauled using the data Elexis got from Koutarou during their last fight. On top of the overall improvements, this giant that had been named Warlord, had one more unique feature to it: to fight in cooperation with the Motor Knights.

Battles in modern Forthorthe consisted mostly of how to break through the opponent’s barrier. In their last fight, Koutarou had practically launched a surprise on Elexis, so Koutarou hadn't used any defenses. However, knowing that there would be a battle beforehand, Koutarou would definitely have a barrier. That's why a means to break through it needed to be prepared.

And that was when Elexis thought of a synchronized attack. While single attacks wouldn't breach Koutarou's defenses, a simultaneous attack might. If several attacks hit at the exact same time, it should be difficult to maintain the barrier. However, a combined attack like that was impossible for humans. That's why the Motor Knights had been created.

Motor Knights could cooperate with one another at quite a high level, but their true power was only unleashed when they were with Warlord. The high-end strategy support computer that Warlord had calculated at what timing each of the shots had to be fired, and sent instructions to the Motor Knights. With this, the Motor Knights attacked in sync with Warlord. Because the Warlord's attack was powerful enough on its own, this synchronized attack became very dangerous. And because the Motor Knights changed their weapons constantly on Warlord's command, their attacks were varied and hard to predict. It was a problematic enemy for Koutarou who was fighting on his own.

Truth be told, Warlord itself hadn't gotten much stronger. On its own, it wouldn't stand a chance against Koutarou. The same was true for the Motor Knights. However, even if their individual strength isn't enough to reach Koutarou, if they all worked together as a single unit, they should be able to win. At the same time, Elexis devised his strategy in a way to hold Koutarou's power back, and turned the victory condition into something simpler. This was the plan Elexis had come up with in order to beat Koutarou.

“All for one and one for all, don't you think that's fitting for a knight?”

Elexis's voice came from the speakers installed on Warlord's face. In contrast to his calm tone, his attacks were fierce.

With a loud boom, the large caliber beam shotgun that Warlord was holding in its left hand roared. The fired beams spread out over a wide area and assaulted Koutarou.

“Tsk!”

Ground Battle

Koutarou tried to evade, but it was difficult avoiding a blast from a beam shotgun designed to cover a wide area. On top of that, with the Motor Knights getting in the way of his evasive maneuvers, Koutarou wasn't able to fully avoid the attack even with the help of his armor.

“Distortion field load increased. Alert message. Due to continuous damage, the distortion field will exceed tolerable levels within a minute. Continuous battle is dangerous, immediate withdrawal is advised.”

“I know! But I can't fall back, so do something!”

“As you wish, my lord.”

Having been hit by the shotgun, Koutarou's armor was letting out screams. Damage was reported one after another, and only ominous forecasts were given. Koutarou's roaring had shut it up, but he felt the same way the artificial intelligence did.

Warlord had been made just to fight against Koutarou. In order to hit the fast Koutarou, it came equipped with lasers that moved at the speed of light, shotguns that covered a wide area, guided missiles and more. Since they were weapons that prioritized accuracy, it had less power than mobile weapons of the same class. However, they had enough power to deal with Koutarou. Moreover, the Motor Knights would support Warlord and launch synchronized attacks if needed.

Koutarou had fought against countless enemies that were strong on their own. He had also fought against a group of weak opponents. However, this was his first time fighting against a group of strong opponents. They were hard for him to fight, and while he had shut up his artificial intelligence, he felt like letting out the same kind of screams. He also couldn't just focus on the enemy in front of him, so Koutarou was panicking.

At this rate everyone will… what should I do?!

Koutarou moved around, evading while focusing on his left hand, creating a fireball using Kiriha's gauntlet. The ball of fire went flying towards the coup d'état soldiers. However, since he was dodging at the same time, Koutarou was unable to properly aim. As a result, the explosion caused by the fireball didn't have the effect he had hoped for, and wasn't enough to stop the soldiers. While suffering minor wounds, the soldiers continued advancing to where the girls laid collapsed.

“Kuh, one more!”

In a fluster, Koutarou tried to attack the soldiers once more. However, he wouldn't be allowed to do so easily.

“Your opponent is me.”

Warlord's laser cut across the ground in front of Koutarou. This carved a large crack in the ground. Sensing danger, Koutarou jumped over the crack and activated his posture control thrusters.

“Don't get in the way, Elexis!”

“I'm afraid I have to!”

The thrusters spewed out propellant and forcibly changed the direction of Koutarou's body. Next, Koutarou activated the emergency boosters on his legs and thrust towards Warlord.

“I can't waste time here! I'll finish this now!”

The soldiers were now very close to the girls. If they fell into the soldier's hands, Koutarou would have no choice but to give up. So Koutarou had to hurry up and finish this battle.

“Focus the barriers on the front, booster output to maximum!”

Ground Battle

“As you wish, my lord.”

Koutarou charged forward with all of his might whilst readying Signaltin. His appearance was like that of a meteor with a long blue tail.

Koutarou-kun, even if you do have ridiculous power, you're only human…

Despite Koutarou charging towards him with a terrific speed, Elexis was feeling relieved. Everything had proceeded as Elexis had planned.

Elexis had always been thinking about what to do to keep Koutarou from being able to use the full extent of his powers. And in the end, he had come up with the idea of using Koutarou's humanity.

He would remove Koutarou's calmness by hurting his friends, put a time limit on the battle to put pressure on him, and had the soldiers approach the girls to make him uneasy. As a result, Koutarou would have to hurry to end the battle, and would be unable to use his full strength.

In a hurry to end the fight, Koutarou would have to forcibly attack without waiting for an opening in Elexis, while at the same time showing his opponent countless openings. His movements also became very simple as he took the shortest route possible.

Knowing that much, there was no fear of being beaten. Elexis calmly fired the grenade launcher attached to the bottom of the beam shotgun. With a low and heavy launching sound, the shot flew straight towards Koutarou.

“One of those won't stop me!”

Koutarou continued his charging, disregarding the grenade. If it was only one then even if his barrier was broken through, his armor should be able to withstand it. Thinking like that, Koutarou forcibly tried to break through.

“…The normal you probably would have dodged this.”

The grenade fired was slow and unguided. Koutarou should have noticed the meaning behind that, considering that Warlord was equipped to deal with him. But since he was in a hurry, the thought never occurred to him.

The grenade exploded before reaching Koutarou. No, more accurately it wasn't an explosion but something inside it had deployed.

“This is?! Oh crap?!”

The grenade didn't contain explosives, but instead a net woven using special fibers. Since Koutarou had his barrier deployed, the net spread across the surface of it and completely wrapped around him. Entangled by the net, Koutarou lost his balance before falling to the ground.

“Guh!”

The heavy impact into the ground knocked the breath out of Koutarou. The next moment, a beam attack from the Motor Knights assaulted him. Because of the impact and the net, Koutarou was unable to move. And all of the beams struck Koutarou.

The impact and heat caused the dirt and rocks around Koutarou to fly up. As a result, Koutarou's appearance was temporarily hidden.

“How'd it go…?”

Elexis stared at where Koutarou had been without letting his guard down. He also used the sensors to track Koutarou's movements. He had lost in their previous fight because he had let his guard down in a similar situation. Elexis wasn't going to repeat the same mistake.

Ground Battle

“…Did it work?”

As the wind scattered the dust, Elexis could see Koutarou lying in a small crater created by the attack. According to the sensors it wasn't a hologram, but the real one. That was when Elexis was finally able to relax. He had bested Koutarou.

Would I have won if Koutarou was the kind of man that only thought about himself… I'm glad he was a very humane human…

Having overcome the most dangerous part, Elexis felt deeply relieved. In terms of individual strength, he was nowhere near Koutarou's level. That's why, if Koutarou had chosen to abandon the girls, he might have been the one lying collapsed instead. That was the risk of this plan, but Elexis had placed his trust in Koutarou's personality and chosen this plan. Though it sounded bizarre, Elexis was rewarded for his belief.

“U-Uhh…”

That was when the collapsed Koutarou's hand moved slightly.

“He's still alive after all that?!”

Looking through his monitor, Elexis couldn't believe his eyes. He quickly opened up the hatch to the pilot seat and confirmed it with his own eyes. But there was no mistaking it.

“How could that be…”

The Motor Knights beams had all been direct hits. Koutarou's barrier had overheated in an instant and the ten beams should have burnt him to a crisp. Even the net that had enveloped Koutarou had been burnt away without leaving a trace behind. But Koutarou had survived, and what's more, he was trying to get up on his feet. Elexis couldn't believe what he was seeing.

“I-I can't lose… N-not when everyone, is in danger…”

Signaltin had protected Koutarou. Sensing that his life was in danger, Signaltin unleashed its magical power to save him. And in return, Signaltin's glow had weakened considerably. Its glow was less than a third of what it usually was. Both it and Koutarou were exhausted.

“U-Uuaaaaahh!”

Koutarou squeezed out what strength he had left. Using Signaltin as support, he stood up.

I have to protect everyone, no matter what!

He couldn't stay collapsed. He couldn't give up those girls. He wanted to save them, even at the cost of his own life. That strong emotion was what let Koutarou stand back up.

“E-Elexis… I'll be, taking everyone back…”

After standing up, Koutarou glared at Elexis. His whole body was hurting, but the fire in his eyes was still present. It was so fierce that Elexis instinctively held his breath.

“…Splendid, Koutarou-kun. I truly wish to have a friend like you. But your wish won't be fulfilled. You have lost.”

Elexis controlled Warlord and pointed the sword in its right hand at Koutarou's throat. Even as he did that, Koutarou couldn't do anything. Standing up was the best he could do.

“Not yet… not…”

“If you can't accept it then look behind you.”

With the sword still at Koutarou's throat, Elexis indicated the back of Koutarou using his left hand.

Ground Battle

“Your precious friends are already under our control. There's no longer any need to fight. Drop your weapon. That is the best for everyone.”

Koutarou looked behind him as he was told. There, he saw the coup d'état soldiers around the area where the girls from room 106 laid collapsed. They had reached the girls while Koutarou was on the ground.

“…Everyone… I, didn't make it…”

Koutarou felt a strong sense of despair as he stood in place and stared at the girls who had collapsed. One of coup d'état soldiers approached the girls. The soldier was looking at all of the girls’ faces, until he reached Sanae.

“…! …!”

It was too far away for Koutarou to hear, but the soldier was cursing at Sanae. He pulled on the still unconscious Sanae's hair to forcibly lift her up before kicking her. Her thin, delicate body fell to the ground like a ragdoll. The soldier had been attacked by Sanae during the battle before and retaliated.

“Sanae?!”

The soldiers' retaliation didn't end there. They began using violence against the other girls as well.

“Elexis! Stop them right now! What grudge would they have with the girls?!”

Koutarou hurriedly turned back to Elexis and desperately appealed to him to stop the soldiers. Elexis was the person in charge, and he should have the authority and responsibility to stop them.

“What a painful sight. Of course I'll stop them right away. But… Before that, I want you to tell me something. Where is the empress and princess?”

The soldiers' violence wasn't something Elexis had planned. However, he used the situation to interrogate Koutarou.

“There's no way I'd tell you!”

“Then choose, Koutarou-kun. The earthlings you're so close with, or the troublemaking aliens. You don't even need to consider it, do you?”

“To hell with that!”

Elexis was practically demanding that Koutarou hand over Elfaria and Theia for the safety of his friends. However, both options were practically the same to Koutarou. If he handed of Theia and the others, Sanae and the others might be saved, but then Theia would be in danger. That's why Koutarou couldn't choose. Alien or not, those things didn't matter anymore. They were all equally important to him.

“Theia is not a troublemaker! I won't sell her out to the likes of you!”

“Then I guess it can't be helped. Just stand there and watch your friends get beaten up.”

Punches, kicks, trampling. There was even someone who had pulled out a knife. The soldiers' violence gradually escalated and was about to go past what could be considered revenge. That might just be acting to threaten Koutarou, but even so, it was an action that would make anyone want to avert their eyes.

“…Y-You…”

A fierce rage and frustration from not being able to do anything made Koutarou grind his teeth with all his strength, to the point where it looked like he might crush his own teeth.

Ground Battle

“…What do you take people's lives for…?”

Something deep inside Koutarou's mind creaked. Every time the girls were hurt, he felt like something inside of him was being torn apart and broken.

“I have always asked myself that question. That's why I decided to end her majesty Elfaria's reign.”

“And for that sake you'll use the lives of others as your pawns? And trample them with weapons?!”

“Without that much resolve, you can't change the world! This world isn't kind enough to change without some kind of sacrifice!”

Elexis excitedly spoke. This was something painful for him as well. He had to crush those he sought to save to change the world. But if he didn't change the world, everything would stay the same. This was a dilemma that Elexis had been wrestling with for several years. Though even then, he had made his resolve to change the world, but it wasn't like his heart didn't hurt.

Koutarou silently watched over Elexis's appearance. His excitement from before seemed like a lie. Ever since he touched Elexis's resolution, Koutarou had regained his calm.

“…I never thought I'd do it in the middle of a battle…”

Koutarou muttered with his eyes closed.

“What are you talking about?”

Noticing the change in atmosphere, Elexis suspiciously looked at Koutarou's face. The soldiers noticed the same thing and stopped harming the girls in order to pay attention to Koutarou.

“…We were friends. That's why I didn't want to get him involved with our troubles. I was planning on doing it once everything had ended and everything was peaceful…”

Koutarou clenched his right hand. But it wasn't out of anger. Koutarou was currently feeling very sorry. And at the same time, he felt mortified over his own powerlessness.

“…I wanted to go sightseeing, have some delicious food, have fun with everyone else, and make some great memories. That's what I wanted to do…”

“Just what are you talking about, Koutarou-kun?!”

Elexis was perplexed by Koutarou's words, but he felt a surprisingly overpowering atmosphere from Koutarou's composed tone. That made him uneasy, and kept him from calming down.

“…Nothing at all. I was just talking about how foolish we were. Fools that couldn't stop a fight that has continued for over 2,000 years.”

Koutarou raised his hand and looked straight at Elexis.

Light had returned to Koutarou's eyes. It was a strong light supported by a strong belief. And there was power in his words. He no longer felt panic or timidness. He had returned to the strong Koutarou that had decided to fight.

“Elexis, you said that you can't change the world without sacrifice, didn't you?”

Koutarou had made up his mind.

At this rate, the girls might die. To change that, Koutarou accepted his own powerlessness and foolishness, and decided to save the girls using any method he could. He wouldn't regret the sacrifice he had to make. Even if that was to involve a precious friend in this fight. Just like Theia had made up her mind when she returned to Koutarou and the others.

“That's right! That's what reality is like!”

Ground Battle

“Then… how is your resolve, Elexis?”

Koutarou's sharp glance pierced Elexis. Koutarou wondered if Elexis had the same level of determination he did.

“What do you mean?!”

Pressured by the atmosphere around Koutarou, Elexis did his best to hold back his unease, and replied with a loud voice to hide his anxiety.

“The resolve that you yourself might become a sacrifice. Or are you an exception when it comes to sacrifices to change the world?”

“I don't know what you're trying to pull, but stop this useless resistance! You can't change anything!”

Koutarou was trying to do something Elexis couldn't understand. In order to erase his unease, Elexis raised his voice even further. He was getting to the point where he could no longer hide how shaken he was.

“You're absolutely correct. I can't change the world. I don't have that kind of power.”

All of Koutarou's powers were borrowed. His only power was his own skill with the sword. Everything else was something he had gotten from others. It had been so up until now, and it will be from now on as well. And what he was trying to do now, wasn't his own power either. But Koutarou would no longer hesitate, no matter if he relied on the powers of others, or if he looked unsightly, as long as it could save those precious to him.

“Don't regret it, Elexis. Nobody will be ever to stop this one!”

Koutarou raised his right hand and clenched it hard. As he did, the back of his hand began to glow. That light formed a geometrical pattern. Since Koutarou's right hand was covered by a gauntlet, the pattern looked like it was being carved into the armor.

“By the pledge of old, for the reunion once promised! Answer my summon and appear!”

Koutarou spoke ancient Forthorthe, used for ritualistic purposes. For each word he spoke, the glow grew brighter and began to cover his surroundings. And as the light covered the surroundings, the atmosphere began to tremble.

“What is this?! A space quake?! What is about to appear?!”

Elexis couldn't understand the situation he was in and looked around his surroundings as his anxiety grew. His subordinates were the same and they stood still, frightened by the light and trembling atmosphere.

The only one who understood the situation was the one continuing his chanting, Koutarou.

“Pass through endless time and countless distance and appear, old king!”

“Stop it, Koutarou-kun! Don't you care what happens to your friends?!”

“You're too late!”

Koutarou ignored Elexis's calls for him to stop and showed a frightening smile before shouting out the last passage of his chant.

“Shake the light and appear! Great champion of the purgatory, Fire Dragon Emperor Alunayaaa!”

In that moment, the light grew even stronger and filled the surrounding space. Nobody could see anything; it was as if they had been thrown into a pure-white world.

“…Rest easy, friend. This is not a foolish act. In fact, I feel honored that you called for me at your time of need.”

Ground Battle

It was a deep and full voice like the rumbling of the earth. As that voice rang out, the light that had covered everything began to gather into a single point. It was behind Koutarou, in the direction of where the girls laid collapsed. Looking for the owner of that voice, Koutarou turned around.

“You came!”

Koutarou's expression eased up a little due to his relief and nostalgia as he looked for the owner of the voice. Since Alunaya had a very unique appearance, he should have been easy to find. However, Koutarou couldn't spot him. As Koutarou was puzzled by that, the full voice rang out again.

“You finally called for me, Blue Knight.”

The voice was much closer than Koutarou had imagined. As he turned to look in its direction, he saw one of the collapsed girls trying to get back up.

“L-Landlord-san?!”

That girl was the landlord of Corona House, Kasagi Shizuka. Shizuka slowly stood up, put her hands on her hips and smiled calmly.

“It has been a while. I am glad to see you well.”

The voice Koutarou was looking for came from Shizuka's mouth. And her smile at the time was different than usual. It was a powerful and composed smile fit for a king.

“Landlord-san?! Why is landlord-san…?!”

Koutarou was confused. He had summoned a friend he met in a different world 2,000 years ago, not Shizuka. But the voice was coming from Shizuka, and her smile wasn't her normal one.

“Could it be?!”

Koutarou noticed something and poured spiritual energy into his eyes. As he did, he could understand the situation Shizuka was in.

So that's how it is! Alunaya-dono is inside of landlord-san!

It was Shizuka's body, but there was another soul overlapping hers. Koutarou could see that overwhelming amount of spiritual energy. And Shizuka's eyes were shining red. Koutarou had seen them before.

“You! Don't move!”

“Stop your useless resistance!”

However, the soldiers couldn't understand that.

They had been wrapped in a powerful light and feared what would come next. But in the end, nothing had happened. And as that anticlimactic scene ended, a lone girl had gotten up from the ground.

That was how they perceived the events. That's why they put their hands on Shizuka's body to deprive her of her freedom.

“Don't carelessly touch my body, scum! Only my friend may do so!”

Shizuka's expression turned into one of anger and roared at the soldiers.

“Uwaa?!”

“What?!”

Despite her not doing anything else, the soldiers that had touched Shizuka were sent flying.

Ground Battle

He blew them away with just his spirit… he's the real deal!

Seeing that, Koutarou was convinced that a powerful existence was inside of Shizuka.

“Burn it into your memories! My name is Alunaya! The prideful king of dragons and the ruler of flame! Don't you forget it, even after you've left this life!”

That was the legendary dragon that had answered Koutarou's summons. The Fire Emperor Alunaya.

Part 3

The moment Shizuka spoke that legendary dragon's name, she became covered in crimson flames. However, the flames weren't hurting her, but rather looked like they were protecting her as they covered the surface of her body. After a few seconds and the flames had disappeared, Shizuka's appearance had greatly changed. She had transfigured into something halfway between dragon and human.

She had horns on her head, and her eyes and hair had turned red. Sharp fangs fitting for beasts peeked out from under her lips. Her arms and legs were covered in crimson scales, as if they were armor. On her back she had dragon-like wings and a long tail stretched out from the back of her waist. She looked like a child born between a dragon and human.

“Blue Knight, leave this to me! While my power is limited in this form, I won't lose to normal people!”

“I'll leave it to you!”

“Here I was wondering it would be, and it's just a mutant? How desperate can you be, Koutarou-kun! Just taking in some characteristic of other livings won't make humans that much stronger!”

Elexis had been surprised at first, but his composure had returned by now.

He didn't think Shizuka's transformation was much of a threat. Though she might have gotten biologically strengthened, she was still a living creature. She wouldn't be a match for Forthorthe's weapons and protection. While they might struggle a little since the originally strong Shizuka had gotten stronger, she was someone the soldiers should be able to defeat.

Ground Battle

“I think so too. In this small form, I can only use a fraction of my power.”

In that moment, Shizuka opened her mouth and spewed fire. However, this was too hot to call fire and it also shot out fast. That's why, rather than saying that she had spewed fire, it was more apt to call it firing a plasma beam cannon. The beam Shizuka fired cut through the air with ease.

“Impossible?!”

Small unmanned fighters were smashed into pieces and fell in front of the shocked Elexis's eyes. These small fighters were automated, unmanned weapons designed to support the soldiers. The comparison to Earth technology would be a light assault vehicle. Though they were called small, they were not something so weak. Yet they had been destroyed in a single attack. And it wasn't just one. The majority of the fighters had been shot down by this attack.

“So I really couldn't shoot them all down…”

Shizuka wasn't pleased with this result and regrettably dropped her shoulders. However, the side that had suffered the attack were speechless. With this one attack, all of the soldiers had understood that the girl in front of them wasn't something constrained by their common sense.

“Uwaa, Aaaahhhhh!”

“Don't come over hereee!”

The soldiers who had seen Shizuka's power up close all descended into a chaotic state. They reacted in all kinds of ways, some ran away, others blankly stopped in place and some fired their guns at random. But they all had one thing in common: their teamwork had completely collapsed.

“Hmph. The quality of the soldiers sure has dropped in these 2,000 years. Alaia-dono's soldiers would have come at me… They're so reliant on their technology that they've lost their willpower…”

Shizuka moved forward, feeling somewhat dumbfounded by the soldiers’ behavior. She had a regal presence as she walked and the ground cracked for each time she took a step. Despite her form, that overwhelming power was still present.

“…Lidith, Fauna and Caris who had parted with them is here… and I suppose the one I am dwelling in would be Mary… I also feel another nostalgic presence… I see, then I guess it was only inevitable for me to appear here as well!”

Shizuka moved forward to protect the other girls. If she didn't step forward, there was a chance that the still collapsed girls might get caught up in the soldiers' attacks.

“I'll make you pay for harming my friends!”

“You monster!”

Realizing how strong Shizuka was and what state his subordinates were in, Elexis hurriedly closed up Warlord's hatch. If Shizuka was left be, the soldiers would be annihilated. So Warlord and the Motor Knights would need to defeat her right away.

“Change the coordination mode! To anti infantry—, no anti mobile weapon!”

“Understood, changing the coordination mode. Target set as mobile weapon. Tactics optimization, changing to weapon preset F.”

Having gotten back into control of Warlord, Elexis spat out orders to the artificial intelligence. That only continued for a short while, but since he was watching Shizuka attack the soldiers, Elexis started to panic. He had to keep the soldiers from being annihilated. To him, they were precious companions who shared the same goal.

“Let's go, Warlord!”

Ground Battle

“Your opponent is me, Elexis.”

But as Elexis was about to head towards the soldiers, Koutarou blocked his way.

“Get out of the way, Koutarou-kun! I don't have the time to deal with you!”

“I'm afraid I have to… that's what you told me just before.”

While somehow managing to support his staggering body, Koutarou pointed the tip of Signaltin towards Warlord. He might be staggering, but a fierce fire still resided in his eyes.

“What can you even do now?! Are you going to fight in that state?! Stop this useless action and get out of the way!”

“Come on now, that's not how it goes, Elexis.”

Koutarou smiled at Elexis. He couldn't let Elexis go since his aim was obviously Shizuka. But Shizuka was strong. The collapsed girls would be better off being hostages than get caught up in their battle. It was because he was aware of this that Koutarou desperately struggled to stay conscious and stood in Elexis' way.

“Weren't you prepared to make sacrifices for your goal? Forget about your subordinates and fight me. Information on Theia and Elfaria, and taking my life was supposed to be your goal, wasn't it?”

“So our companions’ lives are on the line, for both of us…”

Realizing Koutarou's goal and resolve, Elexis changed his mind. In this situation, Koutarou would never step down. He had to defeat him first.

“Very well, let's finish this, Koutarou-kun.”

“Don't think things will go the same as before.”

Koutarou and Elexis both readied their weapons. Thanks to him summoning Alunaya, the battle was proceeding in Koutarou's desired direction. He was resolved to do this. He knew that with his armor so heavily damaged, he wouldn't be able to stall Elexis for long.

“…I have to at least buy enough time for Alunaya-dono to clean up that side… Everyone, lend me your strength…”

Koutarou muttered in a quiet voice as he strongly grasped Signaltin. Now was the time to use every power at his disposal. There was no need for it to be his own. Even a borrowed power would be fine. As long as he could protect what he wanted, Koutarou would use any power he could.

And as if answering his request, a girl's voice reached his ear.

“…I want you say those words to me first.”

That wasn't a voice that had reached him as sound. Instead, it had reached him through the power of the sword in his hand.

“Your majesty?!”

When he first heard that voice, the first person to pop into Koutarou's mind was a silver haired girl. In the past, she had spoken those exact words. However, Koutarou quickly realized it was a different person. There was no way that silver haired girl would be here, but he thought of someone else who was.

“Sakuraba-senpai?”

“Fufufu, you already found out. I thought that was a pretty good act too…”

The voice belonged to Harumi. She also had the power to control Signaltin. That's why it called out to him the way the girl in his memories had.

“Why are you here? What about her majesty, Elfaria?”

Koutarou closed his mouth and sent his thoughts to Harumi. He didn't want Elexis to hear the rest of this conversation.

“If Signaltin's powers grow weaker, I will know, no matter where I am. That's why I had her majesty hide and came here.”

Even after avoiding the unmanned scouts, Harumi and Elfaria hid in the mountain cottage. They believed it would be safer to stay in a place that had already been searched than to carelessly move around. Of course, she didn't forget to use a spell to hide any tracks, just in case.

That was when Harumi sensed Signaltin's powers greatly decreasing. That was a sign that Koutarou and the others were in an incredibly dangerous situation. So Harumi left Elfaria behind in the cottage and headed towards Koutarou.

“How reckless…”

“Either way, I can't protect her majesty on my own. I had to do this.”

There was a high risk in leaving Elfaria on her own, but it was unrealistic to believe that Harumi would be able to protect Elfaria on her own. Harumi knew just how difficult it would be for her to escape from the enemies that had defeated Koutarou and the others and reach the safety of Theia's or Clan's ship. That's why Harumi had decided to lower the chance of that happening by heading out to help Koutarou. Elfaria also shared her opinion.

“And besides, you plan to fight despite being so wounded, right Satomi-kun? Then I should be able to fight with my own body as well.”

“Sakuraba-senpai…”

“Satomi-kun, we will fight together. I will always stay by your side and protect you.”

That was Harumi's confession of love.

“The Silver Princess couldn't do it because of her position, but I am just a normal girl so… I will stay with you until the very end.”

Harumi felt like she was very blessed. While the Silver Princess loved the Blue Knight, she had to give up on her feelings for the sake of the country. But Harumi was different. She was just a very normal girl born to a normal family, and she had the right to decide what to do with her own life. Having experienced the Silver Princess's life like it was her own in the play, Harumi couldn't think of her as a stranger. That's why Harumi wanted to fulfill the wish of the Silver Princess. If Harumi, who shared the same feelings as the Silver Princess, could live with Koutarou, then she believed that the Silver Princess would feel like her own feelings had been requited.

That's why Harumi had decided to fight, not just for herself, or for the Silver Princess, but to fulfill both of their desires.

“I understand. Please lend me your strength, Sakuraba-senpai. It's quite pathetic, but I can't beat Elexis on my own.”

“Yes!”

Harumi released all of the feelings that had built up inside of her and answered Koutarou. She didn't know if those feelings had reached Koutarou or not, but he had said that he needed her. That alone was enough to satisfy her.

Ground Battle

Silver Princess… Please, lend me your feelings! So I can forever protect the man we both feel for!

Harumi clasped her hands together in front of her chest and called out to Signaltin's powers. Harumi carried the emotions of both herself and Alaia. The power awakened by those two emotions greatly exceeded the power of two, and the sword glowed brighter.

Part 4

“Did you finish your prayers, Koutarou-kun?”

“I have no need to pray. I have someone who will do that for me.”

Signaltin began glowing brighter just as Koutarou and Elexis were about to start their fight. The light that had been dim until then suddenly grew brighter, to the point where it was as bright as when Alunaya was summoned.

“What are you planning?! I won't let things go as you wish!”

Sensing danger as the sword started glowing, Elexis sensed danger and he squeezed the trigger without hesitation. As he did, the beam shotgun in Warlord's left hand roared. At the same time, the ten Motor Knights fired their beam cannons. Their cooperation was perfect and the shotgun and beam cannon assaulted Koutarou at the same time.

“Good judgment, but you're too late, Elexis!”

Eleven beams poured down on where Koutarou was standing and created a large crater. However, Koutarou was no longer there, and Elexis's attack had only managed to create a hole.

“You should have shot me before that prayer began!”

Koutarou rapidly closed in on Elexis. His movements were fast and didn't appear to be in as much pain as he had been just a moment ago. Though not completely, Koutarou had been healed and regained his stamina when Signaltin began glowing.

“That light from before–! But even then, you can't move faster than the armor's designed for!”

However, Warlord was tracking Koutarou's movements. He began repeatedly firing the laser cannon on his right shoulder towards Koutarou. Since lasers moved at the speed of light, the moment it was fired, it would hit Koutarou. Lasers weren't something that could be dodged after having been fired.

“It's not just about moving quickly. You should be well aware since you're using those things.”

However, the moment the laser hit Koutarou, he vanished like smoke. The Koutarou that Elexis had shot was an elaborate illusion Harumi had created.

The next moment, two of the Motor Knights to Warlord's right exploded at the same time. Koutarou was standing right next to the two destroyed robots. His aim wasn't Warlord, but the Motor Knights.

“Satomi-kun, get back!”

Koutarou followed Harumi's instructions and fell back quickly. Three Motor Knights nearby were aiming at him.

“Gather, spirits of water! Dance, spirits of wind! Combine these two powers and appear, spirits of lightning! Oh dragon-like dark cloud, open your jaws and destroy! Roar of Thunder!”

But before they could attack, a powerful lightning poured down from the sky and assaulted the three robots. Against the power of nature containing over a billion volts, the Motor Knights’ barriers didn't stand a chance and were unable to do anything. The three that were bathed in the lightning exploded.

“…Amazing…”

If Koutarou hadn't fallen back, he would have been caught up in that lightning as well. Harumi's warning hadn't been to tell Koutarou of her attack on the Motor Knights but to keep him from getting caught up in it as well.

Ground Battle

“…I-I'm surprised as well…”

This result came as a surprise to Harumi as well. Since her opponent wasn't a human, she could attack without holding back. To her surprise, the attack was far more powerful than she had imagined it would be. Harumi started getting a little frightened of herself as she looked at the charred ground and fragments of the robots lying about. If she misused her power, she might get her own allies involved. That's why Harumi carved deep into her heart that she had gained a terrifying power.

“I went too far…”

“It was a sudden fight so don't worry too much about it! Sakuraba-senpai you're doing great!”

“Y-Yes, thank you, Satomi-kun!”

Hearing that Harumi had cheered up, Koutarou took a look at his next target.

You probably think that I'm targeting your attendant robots, so I'll give you a reminder!

Koutarou's next target was the weapon that Elexis was controlling, Warlord. Since the remaining Motor Knights were on the other side of Warlord, there was no fear of a counter attack. This was his chance to attack.

“Just who are you, Koutarou-kun?!”

Having lost five Motor Knights in an instant, Elexis was starting to lose his composure. He fired missiles at the approaching Koutarou at the same time he repeatedly fired his laser to obstruct Koutarou's path.

“I told you before, I'm just a victim!”

Koutarou swung his sword and cut through the air, while Harumi, controlling Signaltin's power, unleashed a shockwave. The shockwave destroyed the incoming missiles. The flames from the explosion hid Koutarou and greatly weakened the power of the lasers. With the lasers weakened, they could be fully blocked by his magical barrier. Bathed in lasers, Koutarou advanced without hesitation.

“I'm just a normal student you'd find anywhere!”

“I don't think that's all there is to you! Your power has deviated from reality!”

The abilities Koutarou had at his disposal were rich in variety and all of them were at a very high level. Koutarou's skill with the sword, the science and spiritual technology that his armor was using, the spiritual energy and magic inside of him, and even the ability to summon a supernatural being. Koutarou was using all of those abilities in harmony to fight. And as a result, his combat capabilities exceeded common sense.

“My power is insignificant. It's all thanks to the powers I've borrowed from everyone else. I'm sure if you used it, you would be even more amazing!”

Having approached Warlord, Koutarou swiftly thrust Signaltin forward. He was aiming for the laser cannon on the right shoulder. Since he couldn't avoid the lasers, it was his primary target.

As Signaltin crashed through Warlord's barrier, Koutarou generated electricity in his left hand. That electricity passed through Signaltin and pierced the laser cannon. Leaving behind a small explosive sound, the laser cannon exploded into pieces.

“That's not a funny joke! I don't have the ability to borrow that much power!”

Elexis suddenly swung with his left fist in an attempt to beat Koutarou down, but Koutarou swiftly kicked off of Warlord before he could reach. As he did, the remaining five Motor Knights tracked Koutarou's movements, aiming for him with their beam cannons.

Ground Battle

“Gather, spirits of water! Dance, spirits of wind! Combine these two powers and appear, spirits of lightning! Like a coiled snake, like a rising tornado, show yourself! Whirl! Thunder Spiral!”

However, the fired beams never reached Koutarou. Using the magnetic field of the powerful electric current she had created, she altered the direction of the beams. Thought it was just a marginal change in direction, it was enough to shift the beams away from Koutarou.

“Sakuraba-senpai, that's amazing!”

Koutarou brandished Signaltin, and attacked the Motor Knights. The powerful magnetic field was interfering with the Motor Knights systems and, while it was just for a short while, the robots remained still until they could resolve the errors that occurred. Harumi's choice of spell was incredibly fitting, and served to both defend and attack. Koutarou made full use of the opening Harumi had created.

Along with several sounds of metal being cut in half, all five of the Motor Knights were cut into pieces. Elexis saw the robotic parts fall to the ground, and at the same time, he saw Shizuka beat down his final soldier.

“…Your true power is not one you can see with your eyes. It allows others to entrust their powers to you. It is your very existence…”

Elexis practically spat those words out.

It was far too brilliant of a comeback. Elexis had been one step away from a total victory, yet Koutarou had turned the tables on him. Koutarou's power far exceeded Elexis's imagination. If he had borrowed his power from others, then just how much did those people trust him? What's more, it wasn't just one person. Considering his strength, Koutarou should have borrowed his strength from many others. Elexis couldn't see himself gaining the help of that many. And so he was forced to admit that his capacity didn't compare to Koutarou's.

“Then I will take pride in that true power. And I would never betray the trust placed in me.”

If Koutarou's true power was as Elexis said, then it meant that Koutarou was himself, as were the girls of room 106 themselves, and the bond formed between the ten was a real one.

“…It's our win, Elexis.”

So Koutarou took pride in that bond. And he wouldn't betray that bond.

Koutarou wasn't alone.

He always had nine girls at his side.

“Not yet, Koutarou-kun!”

Elexis punched a red button installed in the corner of Warlord's control panel.

As he did, the control seat separated from Warlord and flew backwards. The button Elexis had pushed was an emergency eject.

“Oh no?!”

“Even if I can't defeat you, there are still ways to win against you!”

To Elexis, leaving behind the soldiers was a painful decision. However, in the current situation, it would be next to impossible to retrieve them. The chance of Warlord defeating Koutarou and Shizuka alone was slim to none. That's why Elexis had no choice but to choose to escape.

“I see, you're after Theia!”

“That's right! Fighting you directly is not the only way of fighting!”

Ground Battle

However, this wasn't just to protect himself. If he could capture Theia who was fighting in space, then she would be more than enough to negotiate. Though it would be limited to those who survive, but Elexis could retrieve the soldiers later.

“I won't let you get away!”

“You're too late!”

The moment Koutarou got ready to attack Elexis, the control seat he was sitting in opened a space-time hole and entered.

“I won't let you leave on your own!”

Koutarou activated the emergency boosters on his armor and chased after Elexis. He was going to plunge into the still space-time hole as well.

“I told you that you're too late!”

However, just before Koutarou was about to enter the hole, Warlord that had been left on the surface exploded.

And the space-time hole disappeared right in front of Koutarou. As a result, Koutarou simply passed through where the hole had been.

“Damnit! In that case…!”

Though he had let Elexis get away, Koutarou wasn't about to give up. He quickly activated the armor's comms and was trying to contact Theia and Ruth who were engaged with the enemy ships.

“The connection to the network has been cut. Communication is not possible.”

“What?!”

However, the artificial intelligence in his armor let him know that communication was impossible.

Part 5

The reason Koutarou couldn't contact Theia and Ruth was because of Warlord exploding. Warlord had exploded to jam Koutarou's communications.

Forthorthe spaceships usually made use of gravitational waves to communicate. This was a method more reliable than electromagnetic waves, but it was still susceptible to interference. Just like how one could use electromagnetic fields to interfere with electromagnetic waves, gravitational waves could be interfered by using gravitational fields. That was why Warlord's reactor had purposely been overloaded.

“…Because of this interference, not only is communication jammed, but transferring objects is not possible either! Least of all live humans!”

Since communications using gravitational waves couldn't be used, Koutarou was communicating with Clan through the use of electromagnetic waves. Since Clan was further away than the moon, there was a time lag in their communication. And right now, even that slight lag was enough to irritate Koutarou.

“At this rate, Theia will get beaten!”

Thanks to Clan, Koutarou could get a grasp of Elexis's strategy.

Like he had said, Elexis's goal was to defeat Koutarou. Forcibly launching an attack on the surface to draw Koutarou down from space was the first stage of the plan.

The second stage was to lure the Blue Knight to the far side of the moon. In order to minimize the risks, there would be a high chance that either Theia or Elfaria was on the ship. Elexis's goal was to capture and kill them. If the three spaceships ignored the Blue Knight and sent support to the surface, the Blue Knight would have no choice but to reveal itself. And though Theia knew it was a trap, she had no choice but to head to the far side of the moon.

And the third stage was that if Elexis failed to defeat Koutarou on the surface, he would have Warlord self-destruct to keep Koutarou and the others on the surface for a while. By doing that, he would have some time to launch an attack on the Blue Knight that was isolated in space. The first attack also had the purpose of gathering Koutarou and the others and then stalling them.

Elexis's strategy proved effective, and Koutarou and the others were unable to get to Theia and Ruth in space. The Blue Knight was mostly completely automated, but even then it was a bit too much for just Theia and Ruth to control. If they were to go up against three ships, the more help the better. Left stranded on Earth, all they could do was watch the footage of the battle that Clan was streaming from Hazy Moon to them and Koutarou started feeling rushed and impatient.

“Clan-san. Can't we do something with your power?”

Harumi's silver hair swayed in the wind as she asked Clan whose hologram was being displayed by Koutarou's armor. Harumi’s hair had been dyed slightly silver due to the influence of Signaltin's magical power. It gave her a mysterious atmosphere that charmed anyone who saw her.

“…Even if I have the Cradle enter the atmosphere and pick you up, we won't make it in time.”

Entering and exiting the atmosphere followed by a 380,000 kilometer trip to the far side of the moon. Even for Forthorthe's advanced technology it was something that would take some time to do.

“So we're at a stalemate…”

Koutarou strongly clenched his fists. Since the armor was amplifying his strength, if something had been in his hand it would have been easily crushed.

Ground Battle

“Blue Knight, I do not understand the detailed circumstances, but in short you wish to enter the world of the stars?”

Shizuka who had been watching over the situation until now opened her mouth. She had her arms crossed and stared at Koutarou's face.

“That's right. My friend is fighting in space, in the world of the stars.”

“Hmm… The back of that large satellite… There certainly seems to be a commotion going on over there.”

Shizuka looked up at the moon and squinted her eyes before nodding. She wasn't using any kind of magic, yet she could sense the distortion of space and energy colliding.

“But it would take too much time for us to get there using any method we have.”

“I see. Then, Blue Knight, I shall take you there right now.”

Shizuka pointed straight at the moon. She then puffed up her chest, put her hands on her hips and showed a confident expression. This was neither a joke nor a misunderstanding.

"You can do that?!”

"However, it won't be easy. There is a limit to my powers too.”

The legendary dragon, Alunaya, inside of Shizuka looked like an omnipotent being to Koutarou, but even Alunaya had his limits. In fact, he couldn't take form on Earth. As expected, 2,000 years and 10 million light-years was too great a distance.

So he sent his magical power and a copy of his soul to Earth. And using the crest on Koutarou's hand as a beacon, he had been sending bits of his powers to Shizuka who was living Corona House for over ten years. He couldn't simply appear today, but had required such a long time to prepare.

“Rising up into the world of the stars and flying to the back of that satellite will most likely drain me of all my powers. And until I recover, I won't be able to do anything. Would you be fine, even then?”

Right now, Shizuka, Alunaya, only had the power to take Koutarou into space and would be unable to give him support in the battle. And so Alunaya asked Koutarou if he would go to Theia, despite knowing that.

“Of course! Please do so, Alunaya-dono!”

Koutarou was prepared for that.

Of course he was.

He was a knight who served Theia after all.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 1

May 22, Saturday

When Theia's ship, the Blue Knight, arrived at the far side of the moon, the three enemy ships were lined up and waiting for them. Normally being on the dark and far-side of the moon, the ships shouldn't be visible, but thanks to the CG-processed images on the monitor, they were clear as day.

“It was a trap as expected.”

“Yes. Many fighters have been launched from the enemy spaceship carrier.”

“So everything is going as they planned… Activate the automatic interceptor system, hand over the fire-control system and the steering to me. I'll leave the rest to you.”

“As you wish, my princess.”

In order to keep the three ships from supporting the forces on the ground, there was a need to attack using the Blue Knight and jam their communications. That would raise the chances of Theia's allies winning.

Until now, they had sent small fighters to support their soldiers and a dozen or so Motor Knights to support Warlord. If they were allowed to send any more weapons, the ground battle would most definitely end in the coup d'état army's victory.

“Ruth.”

“Yes.”

“Let me apologize beforehand. I'm sorry. We most likely won't return alive.”

In order to protect Elfaria and allow the people on the surface to win their battle, someone would have to attack the enemy fleet. Though Theia and the others had two ships at their disposal, Clan's Hazy Moon couldn't participate in the battle because of the position she was in, which meant that the Blue Knight would have to fight alone. However, it would be difficult for just one ship to come out victorious.

“What are you saying? I made an oath to stay with you through everything.”

“So you did.”

“If anyone were to apologize, it would be the both of us apologizing to Satomi-sama.”

“That's true… then Ruth, if that time comes, let's fall on the moon. If we do that, then we could always watch over him.”

“That is a wonderful idea. By all means, let's do so.”

Theia and Ruth were already prepared for their defeat.

With Theia's ship, they didn't have half a chance of winning. The Blue Knight was a royalty class spaceship, the most powerful class amongst the Forthorthe ships, but it hadn't fully recovered from the damage it had taken before. Moreover, they were losing in numbers as well. The chances of them losing was very high.

“However, I don't believe there is a need to simply let them win.”

“Of course. Since we're going to fight, we should go for the victory. If we don't, I'd feel bad for those who follow behind us.”

But even then, Theia and Ruth were going for the win.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Theia wanted to win, reunite with Koutarou and say something sensible to him. And Ruth wanted to tell Koutarou her wish.

The Blue Knight was the one to make the first move. Since the Blue Knight was the largest class of ships, it also had a larger generator. And making use of that energy allowed for the attacks to reach further. Out of the many weapons at her disposal, Theia chose to begin with the laser cannon.

“Blue Knight! High-concentration laser!”

“As you wish, my princess. Opening the port to the high concentration laser 'Shiny Flower.' Trigger is given to the commander seat.”

Theia was sitting on the bridge's commander seat. There, she steered the ship and at the same time was in charge of the attacks. Though she was steering, there wasn't a rudder like on a ship. Her control system was similar to that of a fighter pilot's, a control stick, and she held her finger over the trigger. Since a spaceship required to be controlled in three dimensions, the control style was similar to that of a fighter.

“Your highness, the defensive ship has taken the front. I'm confirming the existence of a distortion field.”

Ruth was sitting in the operator's seat to the right and slightly below Theia. She was in charge of information processing and managing the ship. Simply put, one could say that Theia was in charge of offense and Ruth was in charge of defense.

“The defensive ship is in the front and the fighters are following it. Behind those is the battleship, and the carrier is in the very back.”

The enemy fleet consisted of a carrier, a battleship and a defensive ship.

The carrier's combat capabilities in itself were weak, however, it carried several fighters within. It would launch those fighters and have them attack. A combined attack by a group of highly mobiles fighters was hard to prevent and had a lot of power behind it. However, there were many cases where a lone fighter couldn't breach a ship's barrier. And for that reason, a carrier practically never operated on its own.

The battleship excelled in attacking. Using ordnance that made use of its large generator, its primary job was to weaken the enemy's barrier. If the battleship weakened the enemy's barrier, then the carrier fighters' attacks would become effective. In other words, the battleship would weaken and the carrier would destroy. So the battleship was an indispensable partner of the aircraft.

Opposite the other two, the defensive ship was in charge of defense. Unlike the battleship, the defensive ship's capabilities were almost solely invested in defense and it came equipped with a robust barrier. At the same time, it's offensive power was next to none. This ship's role was to take the lead in battle and block any attacks. A common feature for this type of ship was that they were unmanned. Since it served as a shield, unless there was a particular reason for it, there was almost no reason to station a crew on it.

The enemy was making effective use of these three ships. The defensive ship was put on the front and protected the fighters launched by the carrier. The battleship followed after the fighters and was in charge of attacking the Blue Knight. The carrier didn't move forward. The battleship would attack and weaken the Blue Knight's barrier, while the defensive ship covered the fighters approach in order for them to destroy their target. It was a strategy faithful to the basics.

“The ships and weapons are probably new models from DKI, but their strategy is orthodox…”

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Theia was a little curious about the basic strategy the enemy was using. When they fought in the past, she felt like this formation was a bit too simple for someone as smart as Elexis.

“What shall we do?”

“There's no time to think about that. Let's get around the defensive ship and attack the battleship.”

Theia took defensive maneuvers with the Blue Knight while turning the bow of her ship towards the enemy battleship. The Blue Knight's movements were like a fighter. With Forthorthe's advanced technology, it was possible to control gravity and mass, so even large ships had high mobility. As Theia moved the ship around, she squeezed the trigger.

“A direct hit on the enemy ship! The distortion field's strength has decreased by 30%!”

“We won't hit that many times from this distance! Ruth, I'm going to get a little reckless!”

“Yes! The fighters are leaving the defensive ships distortion field! It looks like the defensive ship is going to devote itself to protecting the battleship!”

“We'll ignore the fighters and focus our attacks on the battleship! Those fighters aren't much of a threat to us right now!”

Theia's bombardment had been a direct hit on the battleship, but it wasn't enough to destroy it. While the laser had a long reach, it had less power when compared to other weapons. That's why Theia wanted to close in and fire more powerful weapons off in order to destroy the ship, but her opponents understood that as well. Since the battleship was needed to weaken the barriers, both sides directed their focus towards it. And because they knew that Theia and Ruth didn't have the time to deal with each individual fighter, they had the defensive warship give up on escorting the fighters, and had it protect the battleship instead.

“Blue Knight! Variable characteristic beam cannon!”

“As you wish, my princess. Opening the port to the variable characteristic beam cannon 'Powder Snow.'”

“This time won't go the same as the last!”

Theia changed her weapon from laser to beam. While the beam didn't have as far of a reach as the laser, it had considerable power. From this distance, the beam was a suitable weapon.

“Your highness, Energy reaction detected in the bow of the enemy battleship! They're firing!”

“Leave it to me! I won't make a slip up like letting them hit us!”

The enemy battleship commenced its bombardment. It fired a beam like the one on the Blue Knight. The enemy was trying to decide this battle through a shootout of their respective main armaments.

“Three fighter formations are pursuing us!”

“Are they trying to harass us?!”

Three fighters formed a formation. And three formations meant a total of nine ships were chasing after the Blue Knight. However, like mentioned before the fighters didn't have the power to break through the Blue Knight's barrier, so Theia ignored them and continued her attack.

“After one volley of the beam cannon, we'll pass by the side of the defensive ship! As we're by its side, throw some missiles at it!”

“As you wish.”

“Your highness, I'll scatter disturbance particles immediately after the missiles have been fired!”

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“I'll leave it to you! Now here we go!”

Through some skillful piloting, Theia smoothly turned the Blue Knight and charged towards the battleship being protected by the defensive ship. It wasn't a wise idea to have a shootout with the defensive ship in the way, so Theia was going to challenge the battleship to a close combat battle.

“If I do this, you can't fire either, can you!”

Since there was still some distance between them, Theia placed the defensive ship between her and the battleship. With that, the battleship would be unable to attack and allowed for Theia to easily advance. The defensive ship had far less offensive power than the battleship. The attacks from the defensive ship were sporadic and were unable to score a hit on the Blue Knight. Theia repeatedly fired the beam cannon and charged the defensive ship. As she did, the defensive ship gave up on attacking and focused on defending with its barrier.

“The bombardment has lowered the strength of the enemy ship's distortion field by 56%!”

“Alright!”

“Firing missiles.”

“Scattering disturbance particles!”

The beam cannon directly hit the defensive ship just like Theia had predicted and greatly weakened its barrier. Theia then passed by the defensive ship's side and at the same time fired missiles into it. At the same time, a large amount of particles for defense that disrupted communications and lasers were scattered and blocked the defensive ships counter attack.

After passing by the defensive ship's side, the enemy warship appeared in front of the Blue Knight. Everything had been playing out like Theia had wanted. If they could destroy this battleship, Theia and Ruth might have a chance.

“Your highness, the enemy fighter group is attacking!”

“Ridiculous. What are they planning?!”

That was when something unexpected happened. The nine fighters following the Blue Knight suddenly began their attack. With the Blue Knight's barrier intact, their attack was completely pointless. There was no way they could harm the ship.

However–

“Your highness, the Blue Knight's distortion field has lost 20% of its strength!”

“What?!”

Going against expectations, the Blue Knight's barrier had taken considerable damage. This was absurd for fighters to do. If they took repeated attacks with this kind of power, their barrier wouldn't last for long. This was something completely unimaginable.

“The beam fired from all nine fighters have all hit the same spot at the same time!”

“I see, so that's their new strategy!”

The fighters that DKI had created worked on the same principle as the Motor Knights sent to Earth. The fighters performed a perfectly synchronized attack on targets that the carrier designated. The fighters’ individual attacks wouldn't be able to affect the Blue Knight's barrier, but if a synchronized attack was made on the same place and at the same time, it was difficult for even a royalty class ship to withstand. Rather than using new weapons that could easily leave behind evidence, Elexis had opted to go for optimizing conventional technology.

“High energy reaction detected from the battleship!”

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“Activate the emergency boosters, dodge it at maximum speed!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Having learned the enemy's plan, Theia didn't force the attack, but rather decided to fall back. Theia attempted to back away from the battleship at the Blue Knight's maximum speed. If she left the fighters be and had a shootout with the battleship, the results were obvious.

But on its way, the Blue Knight shook. It had been hit by the battleships bombardment.

“The third block of the left leg has been hit! Closing the hatches and releasing fire suppressant!”

“We've been had! We knew they were tough yet this is what we get!”

The fighters’ attack had weakened their barrier, and with the emergency retreat taxing the generator, the barrier had been unable to recover before the battleship’s attack. With that, not even the Blue Knight would come out in one piece. It was thanks to Theia's piloting that they had escaped with just some damage in one of the legs. If a different pilot had been at the helm, they would have most likely been in an even worse position.

Part 2

When Elexis returned from Earth to the carrier, the fleet began their actual attack on the Blue Knight. With this, the Blue Knight began taking continuous damage, and was gradually losing its ability to return fire.

“Looks like everything's going according to plan.”

“Yes, Elexis-sama. However, as to be expected from princess Theiamillis.”

“Princess Theiamillis is a genius at battle despite being the daughter of the pacifist empress.”

“It's surprising that we still haven't beaten them despite using RTS.”

RTS, or the Round Table System. The name was borrowed from the round table that knights of old used to discuss strategy. This device was a new type of computer system that DKI had developed for unmanned aircraft. With this system, unmanned craft were able to perfectly synchronize with other unmanned ships. In other words, it was this system that gave the unmanned fighters and the Motor Knights their ability to use synchronized attacks.

“It just means there are exceptions to everything. Koutarou-kun actually went ahead and broke through the round table.”

“I heard the report… but is that true? I can't believe it.”

“Yes. That boy surpasses logic and probability. It's as if a bad joke put on some clothes and is walking around.”

“Then I am impressed you came back safe after going up against something like that…”

“I may have, but I was unable to bring most of my subordinates with me.”

Elexis's showed a hateful expression. He felt like not being able to do anything for his fallen subordinates was a bitter failure. It made him realize how naive he had been. Even for Elexis who had been looking forward for his fight with Koutarou, this was an unsatisfying ending.

“However, a war is not settled through the victory or defeat of one battle. If we manage to capture princess Theiamillis, we can erase the loss on Earth.”

“We won't waste your preparations, Elexis-sama. We will win. Please observe us at ease.”

“I'll do just that.”

The captain gave out orders left and right and gradually narrowed the encirclement around the Blue Knight. Elexis was quietly watching over the situation.

Elexis may have lost on the ground, but he had managed to seal the most dangerous opponent down there. That's why as long as they won in space and captured the isolated princess Theiamillis, then they would not only be able to get their hands on empress Elfaria, but also their men that were left behind.

“…Koutarou-kun, you were stronger than me… but I will win.”

Elexis was convinced of his victory. And that victory was becoming a reality in front of his very eyes.

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Part 3

The battle was progressing in the coup d'état army's favor. More accurately speaking, the coup d'état army had the advantage from the start. Things had only gone smoothly for Theia and Ruth because they had fallen for the enemy's plan.

The Blue Knight hadn't been fully repaired in the first place, and now it had suffered additional damage by the fighters and battleship. It was now floating in space, damaged all over. The hull was scorched black and the hull was torn up in several places, revealing the insides. It no longer had the beautiful blue appearance it had before.

“…Did the battle on the ground end I wonder…”

Theia mumbled in a quiet voice as she gazed at the moon floating in the center of the monitor. The image of the moon that had gone through image processing was shining beautifully.

“Most likely. And considering that the coup d'état army is not recommending a surrender, then Satomi-sama and the others most likely won.”

Ruth said as she gazed at the moon with Theia.

Apart from the moon, there were several other bits of information floating on the monitor. The damage the ship had taken. The enemies surrounding them. The artificial intelligence that suggested them to immediately retreat. They were all warnings, nothing which would serve as a plus for Theia and Ruth.

Theia and Ruth already knew that they had no chance of winning. Since they could only guess what had happened on the surface, they couldn't stop fighting. That's why they were gazing at the moon, and Earth which should be on the other side.

“That is our only saving grace.”

“Elfaria-sama is safe. Let's leave the rest to Satomi-sama. He will surely protect her majesty.”

“Yes… He is the knight of a legendary princess like myself after all. I am sure he will be able to protect my mother.”

Theia smiled at Ruth, tilted her control stick and made the Blue Knight turn around. As she did, the enemy ships appeared in place of the moon. The fighters protected by the defensive ship, the battleship behind that and the carrier in the very back. Compared to the heavily damaged Blue Knight, the enemy fleet was practically unharmed.

“Ruth, set up automatic control once manual control of the ship is interrupted.”

“Our destination?”

“The moon.”

“…Yes.”

The moment Ruth replied, tears streamed down her cheeks. She knew that Theia was going to make her final attack. And she knew how Theia felt. While fulfilling her duty as a princess until the end, she wanted to indulge in her own emotions in her final moments. Ruth was painfully aware of Theia felt, because she was the same.

“The setup is complete.”

“Then let's go. We'll show them how princess Theiamillis and her guardian knight Ruthkania fights until the end!”

“Yes, let's!”

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Theia's and Ruth's expressions changed into that of a princess and a knight. They would fight until the very end.

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Part 4

Upon seeing what the Blue Knight was doing on his monitor, Elexis realized that Theia was going to make one last attack. Behind the bridge of the blue knight, a large flag formed from lasers and beams was being displayed. The flower in the center of the flag was Theia's crest. This flag was the sign that Theia was going to the front.

“Oooh… princess Theiamillis flag is…”

“So the princess really was on it…”

As Theia's flag was raised, the personnel in the carrier's bridge were shaken. While they might now be part of the coup d'état army, many of the soldiers still held the royal families in reverence. And as a result, the soldiers on the bridge were unable to hide their unease. The same was true for the battleship.

“Calm down! It's not like we’re are trying to kill her highness! We only wish to stop any useless fighting! Make sure our attacks don't hit the bridge!”

However, as the captain scolded them, the bridge calmed down once more. The captain and the crew were part of the Melcemheim band of knights, which had been around for over 2,000 years. That's why their chain of command was deep, and the captain's authority held a lot of sway with the crew. And the unrest was quickly quelled.

“Splendidly done, captain.”

“I am sorry for having shown you such a shameful display.”

The subordinates’ failure was the captain's failure. Holding a title of knight, the captain didn't want to show the unrest his subordinates had before a battle to others.

“You don't have to worry. That is to be expected considering our opponent. Due to our old customs, common sense and old system of rule, it is only natural for them to become so anxious. If anything, your ability to get them out of it is worthy of praise.”

“…I am honored, Elexis-sama.”

The reason the Melcemheim band of knights were obedient of Elexis was because they trusted in his personality. If they hadn't, they wouldn't obey a civilian, even if they were ordered by the military top brass or if he was a relative of the Melcemheim family. And that was true this time as well, as the captain held Elexis in admiration.

“That aside. Now that she has raised her flag, princess Theiamillis will be making one last attack.”

“She will be prepared to die honorably in battle, so if we let our guard down it will come back to bite us.”

“I'd expect nothing less… Captain, I'll leave it to you. You will be in full control of the weapons.”

“Yes sir, I'll make sure you live up to your expectations.”

Elexis trusted the Melcemheim band of knights as well. As a CEO of a enterprise, he knew that if the boss was too intrusive, it would lead to failure. That's why he left the battle to the captain and sat down in the commander's seat to stare at the Blue Knight being shown on the monitor.

Certainly, fighting this would require quite the resolve…

Though the Blue Knight was heavily damaged, looking at the flag on the ship gave off a very regal presence.

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Part 5

Theia quickly moved the Blue Knight around as she took evasive maneuvers and approached the enemy fleet. As she got closer, the fighters that were being protected by the defensive ship left its influence and moved into position to intercept the Blue Knight.

“Your highness, six formations of fighters are approaching!”

“Intercept them with lasers and missiles! Keep firing at them automatically!”

“As you wish, my princess. Entering automatic interception mode with the Laser Gatling and High Maneuver Missiles.”

The fighters moved in three formations, with a total of nine ships each and unleashed synchronized attacks. Since there were six formations, there were two sets of these. In order to correspond to that, Theia activated the Blue Knight's defensive weapons. She left the defenses to the AI and she herself focused on attacking.

“High energy reaction detected on the battleship! An attack is incoming!”

“At this busy time?!”

Theia squeezed the trigger and fired off her beam cannon twice before tilting the control stick to the right. Since she focused on avoiding the enemy's attack, the beams fired from the Blue Knight only grazed the battleship and flew off into the far reaches of space.

“Focusing the deployment of the distortion field on the side of the hull!”

At the same time, Ruth put up a barrier for defense. The next moment, the beam fired from the enemy battleship assaulted the Blue Knight. But thanks to the early evasion and focused barrier, there was no hull damage.

“Ruth, once more!”

“The fighter group is still approaching!”

However, that was when the fighters approached the Blue Knight on the other side of the hull. The Blue Knight intercepted them using lasers and missiles, but only a few of them were shot down. Most of them charged towards the Blue Knight.

“Then I'll just do this!”

Realizing the danger, Theia took a drastic action. She removed her right hand from the control stick and grabbed a hold of another nearby control stick.

“Blue Knight! Anti-Ship Energy Sword, shooting mode!”

“As you wish, my princess. Anti-Ship Energy Sword 'Signaltin' set to shooting mode.”

The control stick that Theia had grabbed onto controlled the Blue Knight's right arm. Since controlling the arm and moving the ship at the same time was difficult, she had refrained from doing so until now.

“Taaakeee thiiiiiss!”

The Blue Knight's arm, several hundred meters in length began moving. The reaction caused by Theia swinging the giant arm was counteracted by boosters firing.The sounds of the mechanisms moving the arm and the boosters counteracting the reaction reached all the way to the bridge. And that sound conveyed the power from the swing of an arm of a giant over one kilometer in height. At the end of the arm was a beam sword just as huge. Theia used it as a beam cannon and swung towards the oncoming fighter group.

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“Three fighters destroyed! Energy reaction detected within the fighters, a synchronized attack is coming!”

Thanks to Theia going against common sense and having a spaceship move its arm, her attack managed to destroy three of the fighters in a single strike. But even then, more than ten fighters remained. The group of fighters attacked at the same time to finish off the damaged Blue Knight.

“Generator output to maximum! Focus the distortion field! And pour the rest of the energy into the Energy Sword!”

Theia moved the Blue Knight's arms and brought the hull of the ship to face the fighters. Since the fighters focused their attacks on a single point, she placed the beam sword in their path and used it as a shield. Thanks to the barrier and beam sword, the Blue Knight somehow managed to survive the attack.

“The generator has overheated and is currently under emergency cooling! The barrier has collapsed due to it being overloaded! The Anti-Ship Energy Sword's system is down! And the energy pool has been almost fully expended! 163 seconds required until systems can be restored!”

However, the price for that was far too expensive. The generator shut down, the barrier was lost, the beam sword turned off. All of the conserved energy had been used up. Because of that, the Blue Knight was simply floating in space.

“So this is it, huh…”

“Yes… sadly…”

If they were fighting with their bodies, they might have been able to keep moving through sheer force of will. However, since the Blue Knight was a machine, that was not possible. It would take another two minutes and a half for it to recover, and their opponents weren't foolish enough to stand idle for that long. Theia and Ruth's fight ended here.

“Say, Ruth. Do you think we fought a fight we could be proud of it?”

“Yes, your highness. You fought splendidly as a princess. I guarantee it.”

The enemy fighter group slowly approached the Blue Knight. Behind them were three spaceships. However, neither Theia nor Ruth were looking at that any more. What they were looking at was the moon floating far away.

“However, I might not have been of much help.”

“That's not true. It is because of you that we could get this far. You have nothing to be ashamed of, Ruthkania Pardomshiha fought valiantly as a guardian knight. I guarantee it.”

“Thank you very much, you highness. I am honored.”

As Theia and Ruth exchanged smiles, they thought of what would happen.

If they were taken by the enemies, they would be used as cards to threaten Elfaria. And after that, they would be imprisoned at best. The worst outcome would be if they were executed. If that was the case, then they would get in the way of Elfaria and Koutarou and the others. That wasn't something that Theia wanted. So she had made up her mind.

“…Sorry, Ruth.”

“No, your judgment is correct your highness. There was no other way.”

“Thank you… you've done well serving me until today. I can only think of thanks towards you.”

“What are you saying? It was a fulfilling life.”

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The two took each other's hand and tightly grasped them. They were both smiling, but large tears were spilling out of their eyes. The time the two had spent together was anything but short. Simply calling them childhood friends would do them a disservice, and now that their lives were reaching the end, there were so many things they wanted to say. However, they didn't have the time to say it. They simply held each other's hands and shed tears.

After a short amount of time had passed, and before the Blue Knight was about to fall into the enemy's hands, Theia gave it one final order.

"Blue Knight, we can't fall into the enemy's hands. Blow up the bridge and us with it."

Theia's final order to the Blue Knight was one meant to kill them.

The difference in risk between Theia and Ruth dying here and being captured by the enemy was too big. This was the only method that Theia could think of. She didn't want those important to her to be put in danger.

"In order to execute that order, an authentication is required."

"My name is Theiamillis Gre Mastir Sagurada von Forthorthe."

"Authentication completed. Confirmed that the order is from princess Theiamillis herself. The order is accepted. As you wish, my princess. The bridge will detonate in one minute."

"Phew… that should do it."

"Thank you for your hard work, your highness."

Having finished giving her order, Theia lightly dropped her shoulders and let out a lovely sigh, and Ruth who was showing her appreciation had a somewhat liberated expression. Their time as princess and knight was over, and they returned to being childhood friends.

"You too. Now my only regret is…"

"Your highness?"

"As expected, I do have regrets. Fufu, it seems I wasn't able to play the role of a saint."

"Actually, I have a regret too. I wasn't able to tell Satomi-sama my wish…"

"Ohh… now you have my interest. Tell me."

"It would be a long story, so I'll tell you later. I can't tell you in a place like this. It's a bit of a girly wish after all."

"If you've said this much, I don't think saying what it is would make much of a difference… Oh well, like you said, it would be a waste to say it in a place like this."

"I'll peacefully tell you over some tea and snacks."

A countdown for the self-destruct was being displayed on the edge of the monitor. The timer had just passed 30 seconds, so little time remained. However, neither Theia nor Ruth were looking at the clock, instead they care freely chatted away. What they were looking at was the large and round moon. Once the countdown had finished, the Blue Knight would head towards it, to deliver them to the moon.

"That's right, your highness, when we talk I'll reveal another thing as well."

"What? That sounds interesting."

The countdown continued, and only ten seconds remained. The two ignored it and continued to talk. It was as if they were saying that it didn't matter at all.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six.

Instead, they held each other's hands. In order to support one another at their final moments, to show their gratitude towards one another and promise to stay the same in the future.

“Yes. It's an important secret regarding your highness's knight.”

“Fufufu, I look forward to it…”

Five, four, three, two, one.

With that the last ten seconds passed. For the last seconds they kept their eyes closed. They didn't want to see each other torn apart in the explosion. As they held hands, they waited for the sound of the explosion to come.

“I'll be troubled if that secret gets exposed though.”

However, what they heard wasn't the sound of an explosion, but the jestering voice of a young man.

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Part 6

When that appeared in front of the coup d'état soldiers, everyone without exception fell into panic. That included the commander, Elexis, as he stared at the monitor in astonishment.

“What is that?! Impossible, something like that couldn't exist!”

The thing that existed in front of him was something his reason denied with all of its might.

In front of him was a single reptile. It was covered in crimson scales, had large wings on its back and a horn growing out from its forehead. That alone was strange, but what made it all the more surreal was its size. Even with a very conservative guess it would have to be at least 25 meters. Compared to this reptile, the fighters flying nearby were far smaller. And the strangest of all was that this reptile was flying around freely in space. The reptile flapped its large wings dashed towards the center of the fleet gradually approaching the Blue Knight.

“Uwaaaaaaa, it's a monster!”

“It's a hallucination! We're hallucinating because we're deprived of oxygen!”

The soldiers had lived in a world with common sense up until now. The common sense on Forthorthe with its advanced science was very different from that of Earth's. But even then, they had never seen a creature flying around in space. Then there was that overwhelming size. Even in space where everything looked small, that overwhelming presence could not be concealed.

ROOOAAAAAAAAAAAAARR

The lizard dealt the final blow to the soldiers by opening its mouth and roaring loudly. Even though sound shouldn't be able to travel through space, and there was a large distance between the ships, they all heard the voice at the same time. Since they didn't know that was due to magic, they practically began doubting their own sanity. And those who didn't were those who believed in old superstition. Even though they were in the space age, the sailors’ superstition ran deep.

As a result, the soldiers panic grew deeper. By now, almost all soldiers had lost their calm and the chain of command aboard the ships had been thrown into disarray, to the point where the ships and fighters might crash into one another.

“Calm down! That enemy might be incredibly bizarre, but it's not like it has attacked us!”

The only one who had managed to remain somewhat calm was Elexis. Since he had seen a bizarre enemy on the surface, he had developed some tolerance to the scene taking place in front of him.

What is this?! This is almost like a fairy tale!

But not even he could fully hide his surprise. That was just how impossible this situation was. That's why his voice didn't reach the soldiers on board. The time the soldiers spent in this panicked state proved to be life changing for Theia and Ruth.

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Part 7

Clan's jaw dropped as she watched the giant red lizard, Alunaya, dash towards the enemy fleet.

“…Really, you are so reckless…”

She was dumbfounded to the point where she couldn't say anything.

“…If something like that just suddenly charges towards you, you'd forget all about the war…”

Clan then sympathized with her enemy. She knew how they must feel. Even Clan who knew the circumstances behind that sight felt it was simply surreal.

Accepting Alunaya's proposal, Koutarou decided to head out into space, and asked Harumi to heal the magicians Maki and Yurika. This was to protect Elfaria and heal the remaining injured people. Once Maki and Yurika were treated, Alunaya transformed from half-man half-dragon into his original form as a giant dragon. Alunaya then had Koutarou and Harumi get up on his back and rose up into space.

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But ascending into space wasn't easy, not even for the legendary dragon, the Fire Dragon Emperor, Alunaya. It was especially true on Earth, where he had no actual form and consisted of solely magical power and soul. The power Alunaya was able to use while in Shizuka's body was severely limited. That was why Alunaya charging towards the fleet was just a bluff. Even if he reached the ship, he couldn't actually do anything to it. If he had been counterattacked, he would have been in danger. And though this was a necessary act to buy enough time for Koutarou and Harumi to board the Blue Knight, it could only be described as reckless, just as Clan had said.

“But even for a legendary elder dragon, this is as far as he can go. The rest is up to you…”

Clan closed her mouth and adjusted her glasses as she thought of Koutarou. As she did, images of Koutarou popped into her mind, but strangely enough, they weren't images of him fighting. Rather, they were images of him messily sleeping, him forcing Clan out of her laboratory and cleaning it, his back in the kitchen as he made dinner for Clan, him smiling at Clan with a carefree expression, and finally him grieving over his own powerlessness.

Bring forth a splendid victory and bring Theiamillis-san and Pardomshiha back home. If you do, you will surely be able to return to that life…

Koutarou wasn't someone who liked fighting. However, he had no choice but to fight right now. In that case, Clan should do whatever she could to support him. She pushed out of her mind the things she was thinking about and began busily working. Gathering information, analyzing, etc. There were a ton of things for Clan to do even if she was far away.

“That red one is definitely Alunaya!”

There was one more person on the bridge as busy as Clan was. That was the young boy who stood amongst the adults, watching the progress of the battle.

“Did everyone see it?! The Silver Princess was with him! The sword was shining and stuff too!”

The boy made exaggerated gestures as he emphasized what he was saying. Only figures and graphs were shown on the monitor right now, but until just a moment ago, it was displaying a lone knight.

It was a strange knight wearing blue armor and holding a silvery-white sword. Despite going up against the coup d'état army who outnumbered him, he didn't take a single step back. And by the knight was a girl with bright silver hair. The girl's hair was black, but the light around it was silver. That girl used mysterious powers to protect the knight and lead him to victory. The knight and girl then got on the back of the giant red-scaled dragon and headed towards princess Theiamillis in order to save her.

“It's the Blue Knight! That person really is the Blue Knight! Her majesty Elfaria and princess Theiamillis are in danger so he came to save them! That's definitely it!”

The boy's excitement was reaching its peak.

The knight that had appeared on the monitor was just like the fairy tale the boy had heard from his parents. Since it was his favorite story, the boy could read the picture book by heart all by himself. A blue armor and silver sword, his left hand controlled fire and lightning and he could fly in the sky. With a beautiful silver haired girl at his side, he defeated and befriended a red dragon.

Since the boy was still young, he couldn't understand the details surrounding the coup d'état. However, he could tell from the appearances of the adults around him that Elfaria and Theia, the empress and princess, were in danger. When a princess was in danger, a knight would appear. There was no longer any doubt in the boy.

He believed that the knight he had seen was the legendary hero. The Blue Knight, Reios.

The Second Coming of the Legend

“Could it… really be…?”

“There's no way. The Blue Knight lived 2,000 years ago.”

“But aren't there too many things that match?”

“It's just someone who's pretending to be the Blue Knight right? He's just an eccentric.”

“Can you win by just pretending though? He was up against the elite troops of the Melcemheim band of knights and the latest weapons from DKI.”

“That's…”

“And what about that sword, the girl and the giant dragon. How do you explain that?”

“…N-No, even if you ask me… I don't know…”

Just like the boy that believed, the adults began believing, little by little.

But because it was so unrealistic, the adults were still dubious. However, it was impossible to explain it all using science. That's why the adults all agreed that the knight that had appeared had powers beyond their understanding.

“It's the Blue Knight! Why don't you all get it! No matter how you look at it, it's the Blue Knight!”

“… If that really is the Blue Knight, then wouldn’t that be great?”

“Yeah. If that was the case, we could still remain hopeful in this situation…”

The only thing they couldn't accept was who it was. They had been chased out of their country and were in an awkward position, so they very well aware of what reality was like. Only a legendary knight could overturn this predicament, but somebody like that wouldn't just conveniently appear. There was no way. This wasn't some fairy tale; this was reality.

“Geez, adults really are suspicious… I won't help if the Blue Knight gets angry at you later.”

That's why even now, only the young boy truly believed.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 8

“I'll be troubled if that secret gets exposed though.”

As a voice echoed in the bridge, the Blue Knight's artificial intelligence began speaking.

“Top priority code acknowledged. Discontinuing self-destruct. Your Excellency, Blue Knight, this ship is very pleased to see your return.”

That was what the owner of the voice had ordered, but this was strange. The one who held the highest rank was the princess, Theia. Yet, the Blue Knight had obeyed the orders of the owner of that voice.

“Koutarou?!”

“Satomi-sama?!”

However, neither Theia nor Ruth were listening to the artificial intelligence's voice. They raised their heads and looked for the owner of that voice. Just as they did, the door to the bridge opened.

“… And Theia, why the hell are you trying to self-destruct? Easily admitting defeat like that isn't like you. And you call yourself my princess?”

A boy wearing blue armor appeared from behind the door. He was staring at Theia and Ruth with dissatisfaction, as if he wasn't aware of the situation.

“But Koutarou! There was no other way!”

“You've gotten a bit too sensible lately. Like I told you, you should be a little more selfish like you were before.”

The boy, Satomi Koutarou, said that to them with a stern look. He ran up to the highest point of the bridge where Theia and Ruth were. Because of the difference in height, Koutarou temporarily became unable to see them. During that timing, Koutarou gave the artificial intelligence another order as he glanced at a monitor.

“Blue Knight, prioritize the restoration of functions. There aren't any humans other than near the bridge. Leave life support to other areas until later.”

“In that case, we can shorten the time required to restoration by 14 seconds.”

“Good boy. Continue like that and omit what you can. I don't care if you push it a little. We're not trying to get the ship into tip-top shape. This is a battle against time.”

“As you wish, my lord. 42 seconds until functions have been restored, 52 seconds until the energy pool has recovered.”

Just as he finished giving out orders, Koutarou finished climbing up to Theia and Ruth, and the conversation that had temporarily stopped started up again.

“If I am selfish, those important to me will die! That includes you too! Why did you come, Koutarou?! I was trying to die so that this wouldn't happen!”

Theia criticized Koutarou for coming. He had somehow managed to board the Blue Knight without her knowing about it, but Theia hadn't wished for that. If she had known about it beforehand, she would have sent him back.

“Carry out your duty to recapture our mother country… those were your orders.”

“Wha?!”

“…Satomi-kun, that's a little cold. If you don't say it properly, I'd feel bad for Theiamillis-san.”

The Second Coming of the Legend

As Theia was at a loss for words from what Koutarou had just said, Harumi appeared from behind Koutarou. Since she had run up like Koutarou had, she was slightly out of breath.

“Harumi?! Why are even you here?!”

“Why, well… Theiamillis-san and Ruth-san are my precious friends.”

As Theia showed her surprise, Harumi looked at her with a smile filled with affection. To Harumi, being in this place was something obvious. She now had more than enough of a reason to stake her life for Theia and Ruth.

“But—”

“Theia, is that hand of yours only for holding onto Ruth's?”

Koutarou said as he looked at Theia's hand. She was still holding hands with Ruth.

“What do you mean?”

“That hand of yours is connected with so many people, you just can't see it right now.”

Theia was planning on dying with Ruth. It was because they had always been together, because Ruth had promised that they would live together, that she felt that way.

However, Koutarou didn't think that was the case. To Theia, Ruth shouldn't be the only one she felt that way for anymore. The only difference was if they were here or not, and that didn't matter at all.

Isn't that right, Yurika…?

Yurika had said in the past that even though they might not always be together, her feelings would always be with the residents of room 106. That's why Theia's hand was connected with everyone even now. She simply couldn't see it. That's why there wasn't any need to think of living and dying together. Ruth wasn't the only one Theia had anymore.

“…Koutarou, is your hand connected to mine too?”

Having understood what Koutarou was saying, tears filled Theia's eyes as she looked up to Koutarou. She was so happy, she just might breakdown where she stood. She had so many friends that were willing to stake their lives to protect her, friends she would stake her lives to protect. Theia believed that her beloved person felt the same.

“Of course. If I didn't, I wouldn't have become your vassal.”

“You mean I am worth that much to you?”

“Worth doesn't matter. Me and everyone else are staking our lives because our hands have been connected for so long.”

“Koutarou…”

What she got back was a clear and powerful answer. Once she heard that, a warm something spread through Theia's chest, before soon turning into an intense joy and a throbbing pulse. Her tears wouldn't stop. Her body was so hot, it was as if she was burning. Theia was convinced that it was for this very moment that she had come to Earth.

“Isn't that great, your highness?”

Ruth, who had been watching over everything until now, smiled at Theia. Even though she didn't say it, she felt the same way Theia did. A burning hot emotion resided in her body and large tears fell from her eyes.

“Ruth…”

The Second Coming of the Legend

The two unconsciously strengthened the grasp on each other's hands. But by now, they already knew that those hands weren't just connected to each other. Supported by that conviction, Theia wiped away her tears, and determination returned to her eyes. They were the strong willed eyes of a princess before a battle. But something was different now, as a deep love that covered everything resided in her eyes.

"Koutarou, Harumi."

"Yeah."

"Yes."

"Ruth."

"Your highness…"

"And those who are not here—"

Theia would no longer hesitate.

The path which she must take was clear, now all that was left was take the first step.

"—please live together with me. Let's walk down the same path, hand in hand."

"Yeah."

"Yes, of course!"

"As you wish, my princess."

Theia had true friends who supported each other. Knowing that, Theia was strong. She was about to burst free from the frame of a princess and grow into something greater.

This moment was without a doubt the moment when Theia truly cleared her trial and demonstrated her potential to become an empress.

Part 9

The time Alunaya had bought them hadn't been all that much. However, that small amount of time was enough to change Theia and the others' fate. The Blue Knight's generator that had shut down was now back online, and the ship's functions were reviving one after another. The places that had taken damage were given up on. Ten seconds after the generator started up, the energy pool filled up, and it became possible to use their weapons and barrier again. Thanks to Alunaya, the Blue Knight had regained some of its power.

"Koutarou, you control the hull! I will be in charge of attacking!"

"Got it! What should I do?!"

"Ruth!"

"Yes! Satomi-sama, please stand on top of the glowing floor over there!"

Koutarou followed Ruth's directions and headed towards the circle glowing on the floor. It was the place where the armor had been stored before Koutarou wore it.

"Maneuver suit, mode change! From attack mode to control mode!"

As Koutarou stood above the glowing floor, Ruth operated the panel by her seat. As she did, several holograms appeared around Koutarou. They all contained various information needed to control the ship.

"Satomi-sama, your body is going to float!"

Next, Koutarou floated up from the floor by about ten centimeters. At the same time, Koutarou's limbs moved on their own and changed position.

"Ruth-san, what is this?"

"The posture you're in right now is the posture the Blue Knight is in! Now all you have to do is move, and the Blue Knight will copy!"

"Alright!"

Koutarou tried moving his limbs a little as a test. As he did, the hologram of the Blue Knight moved in the same way.

"So that's how it works… but the movement is kind of slow. Can't we do something about this, Ruth-san?!"

However, his body didn't move as fast as he wanted. It felt like he was moving his body inside a pool of water. As Koutarou confirmed his dull movements, he turned to face the enemy fleet. The enemy was gradually recovering from the panic of Alunaya's appearance. The decisive battle would soon begin.

"We can't do anything about that. This ship can't move at such speeds."

Ruth showed an apologetic expression. The reason for the problem was that the ship couldn't move as fast as Koutarou could, and with their movements linked, his moments felt sluggish.

But the next moment, Ruth found something abnormal in her computer.

"…Wait a moment, some kind of code is being executed in the Blue Knight's main system without permission… This is?!"

"Damage has exceeded the set threshold. Confirmed the ID of the maneuver suit wearer, Reios Fatra Bertorion. Verifying combat data. Voice-print confirmed. Welcome back, your Excellency Blue Knight."

Surprisingly, the Blue Knight's system was changing its settings right in front of Ruth.

The Second Coming of the Legend

This is a program that's been installed into the Blue Knight from the very beginning! Having Satomi-sama come into contact with the ship during control mode must have activated it! Then, this is—

Just as Ruth understood what had happened, Elfaria appeared on the front monitor. In comparison to Ruth who was surprised, she had a somewhat happy smile.

“Long time no see, Reios-sama. This message has been set to activate if you are in danger even after entering control mode.”

“It really was her majesty's doing!”

“Mother?! And, Reios-sama?!”

Ruth and Theia let out cries of surprise. Though they were surprised by different things, their surprises were equal in measure. Amongst them, only Koutarou had a dumbfounded expression on him.

“…Elle, you haven't changed your way even after 20 years. Seriously… So, what did you do?”

“This ship was constructed using the combat data on Reios-sama that I received from Clan-sama 20 years ago. But because your way of fighting is so offbeat, a normal person wouldn't be able to control it. This should be true for you when you first met Theia as well. So I've held back the Blue Knight's true power by using a large amount of safety devices.”

The image of Elfaria explained as if she was answering Koutarou.

The way he's talking… There's no mistaking it! Koutarou and mother must have met in the distant past! It was probably when he and Clan vanished!

Theia had felt that something had been out of place, but her common sense had always gotten in the way of the truth. But she was now about to reach that truth. Leaving Theia aside, Elfaria continued explaining.

“But the one standing here right now is Reios-sama. The Reios-sama I met 20 years ago. And this is the ship I made for you. That's why I will unlock this ship's true power.”

The moment Elfaria said that, the monitor was filled with red words of warning.

“Changing preset control mode. From common mode one to Reios Fatra Bertorion. Warning. Control of the ship now requires high amounts of skill. Please refrain from having anyone other than his Excellency Blue Knight control the ship.”

In that moment, Koutarou could feel the weight disappear from his body. Up until now, it had felt like he was in a pool of water, but now he could move freely, as if he was flying in the air.

“So this is it!”

“Satomi-sama, a bombardment is coming from the enemy battleship!”

Ruth reported that the enemy fleet was about to attack. Seeing the Blue Knight move, they had almost completely recovered from their panic. The encirclement of fighters were gradually closing in, and the enemy battleship beyond the fighters had its cannon pointed towards the Blue Knight.

“Leave it to me!”

Koutarou swung his limbs around and used that momentum to spin the Blue Knight's hull. At the same time, the boosters on the Blue Knight's legs activated at full power. The Blue Knight demonstrated mobility unthinkable of a spaceship and forcibly changed its flight route. As a result, the beam fired from the enemy battleship completely missed.

“We can do this!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

“Be careful, Reios-sama. The ship can now move as you wish, but all safeties have been removed so there is no consideration for the safety of the ship's hull. The mass exceeds two million tons, so if the hull comes into contact with itself even a little, it'll be blown apart. Please be careful when you control the ship.”

“Don't make something so hard sound easy, Elle!”

Koutarou irregularly shook the Blue Knight's hull as he closed in on the enemy. The feeling he felt when maneuvering was almost exactly the same as his armor. But since he wasn't allowed to let his arms and legs make contact, he had to be more careful than when just using the armor. If it wasn't for Koutarou who had his senses strengthened from the use of spiritual energy, controlling this ship would be next to impossible.

However, Koutarou's efforts were rewarded. The enemy was unable to lock onto the ship's unbelievable movements. The highly mobile fighters were barely able to keep up, but they were unable to unleash their synchronized attack, and the fighters attacks could individually be blocked by the Blue Knight's barrier. Thanks to Koutarou, the Blue Knight's defenses were greatly increased.

“Theia, you focus on attacking. You will open the path and your knight will walk down it. You are his master after all.”

“Mother… Koutarou… just what is going on?”

Theia was still confused.

There were so many things Theia wanted to know, like Koutarou's secret, his relationship with Elfaria, and most of all, the reason why her mother was calling him Reios. Yet at the same time she felt anxious. She worried that something that might completely alter their relationship was hidden beneath the surface.

Noticing Theia's appearance, Ruth called out to her.

“Your highness, I understand how you must feel! However, please focus on the battle for now! That person right there is without a doubt our Satomi-sama! I guarantee it!”

“Ruth… You're right. I got it!”

Her hesitation and anxiety were still around, however, Theia decided to temporarily put them away. Right now she had a battle to focus on, a battle which she had to win. If she didn't win, she wouldn't be able to ask what she wanted to ask. Besides, Ruth had guaranteed it. Because of that, Theia was barely able to focus on the battle.

“Blue Knight! Give me control of only the fire-control system!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Complying to Theia's orders, the devices around her changed positions. Up until now, she had been in control of both attacking and maneuvering, which was why her seat had been arranged like a fighter's. But now that Koutarou was taking care of the controls, her only role was attacking. The ship moved the control panels around her in order to make the role as efficient as possible. As a result, Theia was now able to use a wider variety of weapons and at the same time.

“Here we go, Koutarou! I will make a path! You take the ship straight down it!”

“Don't mess up!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

The Second Coming of the Legend

Theia began her bombardment. Though Koutarou's movements were irregular and difficult to predict, Theia matched Koutarou and skillfully attacked when she could. Theia's target was the fighter group between the Blue Knight and the enemy battleship. She used lasers for distant enemies, beams for nearby ones, and missiles for the ones retreating as she eliminated the fighters that stood in their way.

“Are you implying I could mess up?! Just who do you think you're talking too?!”

“My princess who has been quite pessimistic lately.”

“Idiot! I'll punch you later! Definitely!”

“Just make sure it doesn't hurt too much.”

“Of course it will hurt!”

As the force of the words increased, they sped up their movements. Seeing them like this reminded Ruth of how they were when playing games.

Satomi-sama… your highness… This is what the two of you should be like…

Ruth felt something warm fill her chest. However, she did her best to endure it. Now wasn't the time to cry. Ruth took action to support the two, and a message for that Ruth had been left by Elfaria.

“Ruth, please cover for Reios-sama and Theia. If those two get serious, this ship will demonstrate its full might. That's how I made it after all.”

“Your majesty…”

“However, the generator's output is still the same, so the power control will be much harder than before. There may also be times where the gravity and inertia controls can't keep up with Reios-sama. In order to control all of that, your power will be needed.”

“Then this ship was designed with the three of us in mind…”

Ruth was surprised by Elfaria's words, but she altered the parameters to support the two who were fighting. Just like Elfaria had said, there was a lot Ruth had to do.

Not only were there the distribution of energy from the generator, the energy pool and the management of the barrier, but she also had to assist the ship to deal with Koutarou's movements and deliver information about the enemy to Theia. She would need to see through their habits and thoughts and control the ship before they took action. This wasn't something anyone other than Ruth, who had always been watching those two, could do.

“I understand, your majesty, I will make sure those two will win!”

When Ruth's assistance was added to Koutarou's and Theia's movements, the two began moving even faster and fiercer. The three were as one. Thanks to the strong bond between the three, they were able to take the Blue Knight’s powers to new heights. As a result, the struggle from before seemed like a lie, and they were pushing back the enemy fleet. This wasn't because one of them was special, but because the three of them shared something special.

“And… is there anyone else there? I leave this message to you in hopes that there is.”

“Your majesty…”

Finally, Elfaria left a message to Harumi as well. Surprised, Harumi looked at Elfaria being shown on the monitor.

“Theia is an awkward child. I'm sure she's had to go through a lot being the empress's daughter. She only fully trusts Ruth. And now she has gotten a lot of friends. There is nothing that makes me as happy as this.”

The Second Coming of the Legend

Elfaria had learned of the fate her child would go through from her meeting with Koutarou. She also learned that Theia would greatly mature on Earth and find irreplaceable friends. That's why Elfaria had been able to fulfill her own duty, supported by her strong feelings.

“I ask this of you, aware that it is a very impudent thing to ask. Please, be of Theia's help. That girl is very stubborn, so she wouldn't be able to honestly rely on others when she is suffering. But that is not true.”

A tear streamed down Elfaria's cheek. That was something Elfaria herself should have done. But her responsibility as the empress made that difficult, and as a mother, that reality made her incredibly sad.

“So please, take care of Theia. Please let her know that she can rely on those important to her. Please give that girl a very normal happiness…”

Elfaria bowed as she spoke those words and that was where the video ended. Having seen that video, Harumi could feel the strong emotions Elfaria had.

“Please be at ease, your majesty. That was what Theiamillis-san did for me. I had shut myself in, but she showed me to the outside world. That's why it's my turn now. As long as I'm playing the role of the Silver Princess on Earth, I will forever be Theiamillis-san's ally!”

Harumi showed a determined expression and began incanting a spell in ancient Forthorthe. Harumi was trying to add a fourth into the Blue Knight that was being moved by the bond of three. That would create a powerful force that would greatly exceed Elfaria's expectations.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 10

The coup d'état army had temporarily been thrown into disarray by the appearance of the gigantic reptile, but they had regained their calm after the lizard withdrew without doing anything and when the Blue Knight began moving once more. However, they would only remain calm for a few moments. That was because the Blue Knight had turned into something that completely overturned common sense in space battles.

“Elexis-sama, the Blue Knight is moving too fast for the cannon to lock onto it!”

“Calm down! Have the fighters deal with it!”

“About that… They are being thrown around by the Blue Knight's movements and are unable to get into a proper attack formation! And the fighters are being shot down one after another! At this rate, we will eventually be unable to do anything!”

The bridge of the carrier that Elexis was onboard was no exception, and it was wrapped in a noisy atmosphere. They had never heard of a royalty class spaceship with mobility comparable to a fighter. On top of those quick maneuvers, it was also accurately shooting down the fighters. That was impossible. The Blue Knight was heading towards the battleship, and at this rate, the battleship would get destroyed once the Blue Knight got closer. They had to stop the Blue Knight in some way.

“Then use RTS missiles! If you use high maneuverability type missiles, they should be able to keep up with that speed!”

“Understood! All ships, launch high maneuverability missiles! Set the tracking to RTS!”

RTS missiles tracked targets the same way robots and fighters did. Several missiles worked together to corner the enemy and detonated at the same time if possible Evading high maneuverability missiles was difficult, and the force behind several missiles detonating at the same time was very high. It was a very effective weapon, but it had a major flaw. Controlling many missiles and fighters at the same time placed a major load on the computer controlling them. As a result, control of the fighters had to be temporarily abandoned, dropping their defensive power considerably. They hadn't refrained from using these missiles because it wasn't necessary, but because of the above described problem.

“The Blue Knight has drawn its Anti-Ship Energy Sword, Signaltin!”

“What can they do with that?! There's no use, princess Theiamillis! The only one who could knock the missiles down with that sword would be Koutarou-kun— wait?!”

At that moment, everything Elexis up until now rushed through his mind. The girl on the ground who had red scales, the giant red dragon that had appeared out of nowhere, the Blue Knight's movements that got better immediately after, and now the Blue Knight that drew a sword against incoming missiles. All of that led Elexis to a single conclusion.

“You're onboard that ship, aren't you Koutarou-kun!”

The red-scaled dragon had brought Koutarou into space. It had charged them in order to buy time for Koutarou to get onboard the Blue Knight. The ship’s movements had gotten better because Koutarou was controlling it. Finally, the Blue Knight had drawn its sword because Koutarou, who was now in control of the ship, could cut them down.

“Undo the RTS on the missiles! Restart control of the fighters right away!”

“But if we undo the RTS now, the tracking will—”

“Even if they keep tracking, they won't beat them! Don't you get it?!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

Elexis's decision was swift and precise, but because the captain had hesitated, they didn't make it in time.

“I've been had… I should have realized from the time I saw him using the Blue Knight's maneuver suit… That ship has been designed with Koutarou in mind!”

Elexis frustratingly bashed on the armrest of his seat.

“Just who is he?! How can he have this much power?! Why is he supporting the royal families?! Why has the Blue Knight been designed with his power as its premise?!”

Elexis stared at the Blue Knight swinging its giant sword of light. The sword was being swung using an ancient Forthorthe sword style. The beautiful swordsmanship enchanted all those who saw it and cut off the incoming group of missiles.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 11

The missiles had been blocked thanks to more than just Koutarou.

Koutarou had been aware of all the missiles approaching thanks to Harumi's spell used to detect metal. If it wasn't for this spell, Koutarou wouldn't have been able to get a grasp on the amount of missiles or their rough location. On top of that, Theia had shot down the missiles that Koutarou had missed using lasers. Despite that, a few missiles still hit the Blue Knight, but this was completely blocked by the barrier. Ruth's energy distribution had been perfect and they hadn't run low on energy from the first sword strike all the way to the barriers deploying.

In other words, this result was because all four had demonstrated their powers.

“Satomi-sama, keep charging forward! Because of those missiles, their system has been overloaded and their ships barely function at all!”

“Let's go Theia!”

“Leave it to me! But what will you do, the defensive ship will get in the way!”

“Ruth-san, can't this sword break through?!”

“It's possible. But considering that ship’s characteristics, it would be difficult if we didn't use full power!”

Koutarou and the others were going to attack the battleship. Currently, only that ship had the potential to take down the Blue Knight with a single attack. If the battleship got off a single lucky hit, and the fighter group followed up on the attack, the Blue Knight's barrier wouldn't last.

However, there was a risk involved with their plan. Since the defensive ship was protecting the battleship, it would be difficult to attack directly. They would need to use their mobility to circle around the defensive ship, or use the energy sword to destroy it. The former might give the fighters the time they needed to restart, while the latter would leave them defenseless as the sword drained all the energy. Both options had their own risks.

“Uhm, Ruth-san. Does that, uhm, barrier was it? Does the barrier protecting the spaceship work the same way Satomi-kun's armor does?”

That was when Harumi, who had focused on supporting with magic, joined the conversation. Her expression was quite different from her usual timid one. She reminded everyone of what she had been like on top of the stage.

“Yes! Though the output is on a completely different level, they work on the same basis!”

“Then I will do something about it. Satomi-kun, please attack with the big Signaltin.”

“Alright! Let's go Theia!”

“Yeah!”

Koutarou or Theia didn't even listen to any of the details of Harumi's plan as they decided to attack with the energy sword. They believed in her and they didn't have the time to hesitate. Koutarou set the course for the defensive ship and Theia destroyed any fighters in the way.

“Harumi-sama, what are you going to do?”

Instead, Ruth asked Harumi for the details. Considering their roles, Ruth needed to know what Harumi was planning.

“We will attack with two Signaltins. Using the small Signaltin's magical power, I'll convert the large Signaltin's power into something else.”

“Is something like that even possible?!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

“If it's just the tip, it should be possible.”

“I see, so that's what you mean. That's a good idea!”

Having guessed what Harumi was planning, Ruth began making adjustments to the Blue Knight. Harumi took a deep breath to prepare herself and held her hands together in front of her chest.

“Satomi-kun, use Signaltin.”

“Okay.”

Koutarou obeyed Harumi and drew Signaltin, which was hanging down his waist, from its sheath. As he did, the Blue Knight recreated the anti-ship energy sword to match his movements. The big and small Blue Knights held their own Signaltin and charged towards the defensive ship.

“Here I go!”

Harumi closed her eyes shut and focused. She was trying to draw out all of the power from Signaltin. That much power was necessary if she wanted to affect something as big as a spaceship. Adhering to Harumi's will, Signaltin began emitting a massive amount of magical power. The light and overflowing magical power was enough to make the bridge they were in to shake.

Sakuraba-senpai's hair is…

When Harumi had used magical power before, her hair had glowed silver. However, now when she was drawing out all of the power from Signaltin, it didn't just stop there. Her hair wasn't just glowing, it was now changing into a silver color.

Your majesty Alaia…?

Koutarou was instinctively drawn towards her. With her hair colored silver, Harumi now looked exactly like Alaia, the Silver Princess he had met 2,000 years in the past. He could also feel presence the same as Alaia's from the magical power surging up. If he hadn't know it belonged to Harumi from the very start, he wouldn't have been able to tell them apart.

“Past, present and future, oh mother of all things, goddess of dawn.”

Then there were the words of prayer flowing out from Harumi's mouth. Those too were the same as Alaia's. At this point, even Koutarou who knew the Alaia from 2,000 years ago had trouble telling them apart.

“A descendant of Forthorthe, your faithful servant asks of thee. Now is the time to unleash your true power and bestow us the power to dispel this national crisis.”

As Harumi continued with her prayer, the Blue Knight's anti-ship energy sword was wrapped in a pure-white light, and began glowing just like the Signaltin in Koutarou's hands.

“Wind of the heavens. Green of the ground. Water of the sea. Fire of the mountain. Using my life as provision, reveal the power to unify all things!”

The light enveloping the two swords pulsed, as if it was a pulse from a living being. The two pulses lined up perfectly with Harumi's.

“My name is Alaia! The silvery white snow of Mastir! Oh holy sword of the temple, answer my call and cut open the path to our future!”

Harumi finished her prayer and all of Signaltin's power flowed into the energy sword. That gigantic sword was now Signaltin. It didn't matter if it didn't have a physical form or not. The anti-ship energy sword was now glowing as the true Signaltin.

“Now, Satomi-kun!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

With her prayer over, Harumi looked up at Koutarou. Because she looked so much like Alaia, Koutarou forgot where he was for a moment.

Not good. Keep it together! Now isn't the time to space out!

However, that was just for an instant. Koutarou quickly remembered his battle, and readied the Blue Knight's sword. They were now right on top of the defensive ship. There was no time to lose focus. As if scolding himself, he shouted out in a loud voice.

“Here I go, everyone!”

“Go all out!”

“The Anti-Ship Energy Sword, Signaltin, has been charged to 100%!”

“I'll leave it to you, Koutarou!”

Theia's bombardment and Ruth's barrier control protected the Blue Knight. Harumi's power had made the energy sword grow bright white. And Koutarou firmly held Signaltin in both hands and thrust it forwards with all his might.

Matching Koutarou's movements, the Blue Knight's hull roared as the giant sword thrust forward. The target was the generator of the defensive ship in front of it. The defensive ship responded by raising its barrier to block the sword. In exchange for near non-existent weaponry, the defensive ship was equipped with a very potent barrier. That's why not even an anti-ship energy sword should be able to pierce through it.

“Gooooooooo!”

But as Koutarou roared, the energy sword pierced through the defensive ship's barrier. The defensive ship's barrier let out a scream in the form of violent blinking before shattering like glass and disappearing.

This was the result of the power that Harumi had given to the energy sword. Using Signaltin's power, she replaced the tip of the energy sword with spiritual energy. Since Forthorthe's barriers couldn't block spiritual energy, the tip easily break through, and once the sword was in, the rest was easy. Breaking something with a crack in it was an easy task. The energy blade naturally poured through the crack and smashed the barrier.

“Open up all ports! Keep firing until you're out of energy!”

“As you wish, my princess.”

Once the barrier fell, Theia used almost all of the Blue Knight's anti-ship weaponry to attack. Beams, lasers, missiles. All imaginable types of weapons were used to attack the defenseless ship. The defensive ship's hull was torn through like paper, proving that a royalty class spaceship's firepower isn't just for show. The defensive ship was instantly destroyed, and only the escape pod encompassing the bridge lonesomely floated around in space.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 13

Koutarou and the others had been able to destroy the defensive ship partly because the fighters were unable to move. Knowing that, they didn't let their guard down even after destroying it and moved on to attack the battleship. The enemy's attack power was still present, so going on the defensive would only increase the risk to them.

“Koutarou! We're focusing on the main armament turret!”

“Got it!”

Theia and Koutarou's target was the main armament sticking out from the upper part of the battleship's hull that was capable of turning on its own.

Because the main armament was capable of rotating, it could fire in every direction regardless of what way the battleship was facing. In return, it stuck out from the ship, had a weaker construction and was an easier target. It was a powerful weapon once an adequate defense was prepared.

So now that the defensive ship in charge of protecting the battleship has been destroyed, going after the main armament was the most effective strategy. Once it was removed, the battleship wouldn't be much of a threat.

“Your highness, the fighter group has reactivated! They are chasing after us!”

“Koutarou, I'll leave the battleship to you! Do something about it!”

“What do you mean with something?!”

Theia began her bombardment to keep the reactivated fighters from closing in, leaving the attack on the battleship to Koutarou. Since he had planned on letting Theia do the attacking, Koutarou himself didn't have any method of attack planned.

“Damnit, in that case! Ruth-san, change the sword to shooting mode!”

“As you wish, my lord!”

Koutarou readied the anti-ship energy sword. As he did, a beam was fired from the tip of it. Since beam swords and beam cannons functioned very similarly, the anti-ship energy swords worked both ways.

“Uooooooooo!”

Koutarou shot off beams repeatedly as he closed in on the coup d'état army's battleship. Of course, the enemy didn't just sit still and take it. The main armament took aim and repeatedly fired at the Blue Knight.

“As if I'd let you hit me!”

Koutarou turned and spun the Blue Knight around in an attempt to dodge. Seeing that the maneuver alone wouldn't be enough, Ruth took additional action.

“Releasing a section of the gravity and inertia control!”

“Uooooooooo?! W-What's this?!”

The moment Ruth inputted a command into the panel, the Blue Knight's rotations sped up. As a result, it allowed the ship to avoid the incoming beam, but the sudden increase in speed startled Koutarou.

“Please get used to it, Master! I'm sure you can do it!”

“You're kidding!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

Even though Koutarou was panicking, Ruth showed him no mercy. Even now she was speeding up the ship to match Koutarou's movements. Koutarou pointed the front of the ship towards the coup d'état army while desperately struggling to maintain control of the Blue Knight.

“…Even after 2,000 years you're still an amusing lot…”

Having used up most of his magical power, Alunaya watched the Blue Knight move at lightning fast speeds in his half dragon half human form. Since this way of fighting was outside of the common sense of dragons, Alunaya watched over Koutarou and the others with an amused expression.

“Well, if you're going to play like that! Ruth-san, in five seconds focus the barrier around the right leg!”

“Kyaaaa, wait, waiiit!”

“I'm not waiting!”

Koutarou repeatedly fired beams from his sword while closing in on the battleship. Having taken several hits, the battleship’s barrier was just about to give out, so Koutarou spun around and kicked his right leg towards it.

“Too fast! You're too fast, Master!”

“I'm sure you can do it, Ruth-san!”

“You're kidding!”

It was now Ruth's turn to panic as she hurriedly made adjustments to the barrier. Without even waiting for her to finish, Koutarou let loose a roundhouse kick. The power of a kick from a machine a kilometer in length and over 2,000 ton was terrifying. Combined with the barrier raised moments just before impact, the kick easily tore through the battleship's barrier and sent the turret with the main armament on it flying.

Part 13

As Koutarou sent his kick flying, Theia bombarded the battleship with everything they had, and as a result, it lost all of its combat potential. Leaving the disabled battleship be, Koutarou and the others headed for the last remaining ship, the carrier. The only things left that could be a threat were the fighters being controlled by it.

“There are nine fighters left, a total of three formations! 27 have been destroyed so far!”

“Though they might be unmanned, they sure are using them like they are disposable.”

“They probably won't be using them anymore… Ruth-san, please open a channel to that ship.”

“That's an illegal fleet of ships. I can't imagine they'd answer…”

“He'll answer. That's the kind of guy he is. Please, Ruth-san.”

“Yes.”

Before he attacked, Koutarou wanted the enemy to surrender. Realizing his intentions, Ruth sent a hail to the carrier. Shortly thereafter, Elexis appeared on the Blue Knight's monitor.

“I was astonished by your way of fighting, Koutarou-kun.”

“I just took a bunch of risks, and somehow managed to make it. Now I'm trying to avoid taking any more risks.”

“Is that a request that I surrender?”

“I don't care if you surrender or retreat. Neither of us have anything to gain from this fight. Am I wrong?”

“Yes. That's what my subordinates believe. That's why I had them leave this ship. You can see them right?”

Elexis had evacuated all of his subordinates using lifeboats. They were headed for the disabled battleship, leaving only Elexis behind on the carrier.

“There's no need to buy time.”

Koutarou figured that Elexis was planning to buy time for his subordinates to escape. Something similar had happened several times already.

“I'm not trying to buy time. This is me being stubborn. I want to fight until the end.”

“Stubborn, huh… then I'll refrain from asking any further.”

Seeing Elexis's smile through the monitor, Koutarou realized he was serious. Koutarou was standing here because he had remained stubborn, and he knew that in this case, there was no way of convincing Elexis to surrender. Koutarou understood that fact very well.

“Thank you, Koutarou-kun. I like that side of you. That might also be why…”

Elexis wanted to give it his all. He had found competition for the first time in his life in the form of a rival, Koutarou. That's why Elexis didn't want to end their fight just yet. He still hadn't given it his all, he wanted to see it through to the end. He was like a child that refused to go home. From that perspective, one could say he wanted to play with Koutarou forever.

“In exchange, can I ask you something?”

“What would that be?”

“Once this fight is over, what will the coup d'état army do?”

“Well… they would probably withdraw for a while. They would officially announce that her majesty Elfaria's condition has turned for the worse, and during that time they would manufacture evidence to turn her into a criminal. After that, once they've made their evidence, they will announce that they had only declared Elfaria as ill because they couldn't treat her like a criminal until they had gathered all the evidence they needed… or something like that.”

“And then they'll attack all out.”

“Probably. Well, until then they might send out a few assassins.”

“I see. Thank you, Elexis.”

“In exchange, can I ask that you take this seriously?”

“I got it, I will.”

“I'm looking forward to it.”

With those words as his last, Elexis cut off the communications. His appearance disappeared from the Blue Knight's monitor, and instead it showed the carrier that had begun moving.

You've started to care for your allies… but you still live life from moment to moment, don't you, Dextro…

Koutarou reminisced about his past enemy and took a stance with the Blue Knight. There might only be one ship left, but he couldn't let his guard down around this enemy.

“Theia, he's going to go all out from the start.”

“I know. I do have some experience with battles.”

“The carrier's missile ports are opening, I believe it's those guided missiles. The battleship is still not moving. It seems that it won't be joining in for the battle.”

“…He might not be suited for fighting, just like me…”

The battleship still had undamaged missile ports as well. However, Elexis wasn't using them. That was because Elexis would hate the results if he did.

“What was that?”

“No, it was nothing… Theia, I'll leave the missiles to you! Let's finish this as quickly as possible!”

“Yeah!”

“As you wish, my lord.”

Elexis was challenging them to a fight, well aware how much of a disadvantage he was in. Koutarou knew that he had to take this seriously in more ways than one, so he activated the Blue Knight's boosters and dashed towards the carrier Elexis was on. But in order to stop him, the remaining nine fighters stood in the way. Meanwhile, the carrier fired its missiles. With the number of fighters reduced, it was possible to deal with both the fighters and missiles at the same time.

“I see, that's an attack that's hard to block!”

Seeing those missiles launched, Koutarou used the Blue Knight's posture control thrusters to make a large evasive maneuver. While the missiles and fighters were low in number, because their weapons’ characteristics were different, an interlaced attack from both would be difficult to block.

“He's probably trying to slow us down with the fighters and defeat us with the missiles! Leave the missiles to me! You shake off the fighters! You can disregard the carrier's bombardment as well!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

“As you wish, my princess!”

Koutarou and Theia stepped up to the plate after dividing their roles. Koutarou would make use of their mobility to keep the fighters from closing in, while Theia would deal with the missiles closing in from a different trajectory. With the decrease in numbers, they would be able to deal with this.

“Your highness, the carrier is still launching missiles! Strangely enough, there are more missiles than before!”

“It's a smokescreen! You've thought this through, Elexis!”

In response, Elexis fired missiles that used the standard guidance system. Since Koutarou and the others couldn't tell the missiles apart, they needed to be equally cautious of all the missiles. Theia busily fired in an attempt to shoot all the missiles down.

“Gather, spirits of earth. Kneel before me and display the power behind your name. Shout, lineage of earth!”

Harumi cast her spell on Theia. As she did, Theia was able to sense the missiles and fighters flying around in space. It was the spell to detect metal.

“Thanks, Harumi!”

“Good luck!”

Even magic that could be useful in almost any situation was helpless against objects flying around at extremely fast speeds. That's why this was all that Harumi could do. Only being able to watch over the battle made Harumi feel frustrated.

“The number of fighters is decreasing! Deal with the carrier!”

With so many missiles flying around and no way to tell them apart, Koutarou and the others were pressed to defeat the carrier. Koutarou evaded the fighters’ attacks and pointed the bow of the Blue Knight towards the carrier. Meanwhile, Theia prioritized shooting down missiles coming from the direction they were traveling. Thanks to that, Koutarou was allowed to focus on just the fighters and the carrier.

“Go, I will make a path!”

“Uooooooo!”

As Theia created a path for Koutarou, he manipulated the Blue Knight to travel down it with the agility of an acrobat. Several explosions occurred around them, making it look like a fireworks festival. However, this wasn't something quite so elegant. This was a matter of life and death.

“The carrier has set its generator output to maximum!”

“Don't let him get away Koutarou! Finish this battle right now! We won't last that long!”

“Leave it to me!”

As Koutarou approached, Elexis drained as much power as he could from the carrier's generator. Theia wouldn't be able to keep up her accurate shooting for long, so she figured that Elexis was going to strengthen his barrier and distance himself from the Blue Knight.

“Oh no, this is?!”

However, the situation developed in an unexpected direction.

“The carrier is charging right towards us! He's not trying to buy time!”

“Is he trying to ram us?!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

“So that's how it is, Elexis!”

The distance between the Blue Knight that had accelerated to keep Elexis from fleeing and the carrier which had decided to charge forward instead of retreating shrunk rapidly. Even if they tried to evade, their escape routes had been cut off by missiles and fighters. Elexis's goal had been to ram them with the carrier from the very start.

“So that's why he had all the soldiers evacuate! He used the missiles and fighters to conceal his true goal and to cut off any escape! Just how far will you go Elexis?!”

Koutarou showed a bitter expression as he spread the Blue Knight's arms open. Theia's attacks had broken through the carrier's barrier, but the ship charged right towards the Blue Knight.

“Ruth-san, focus the—”

“Focusing the distortion field on both the forearms! Setting generator output to maximum and focusing all available energy into the distortion field!”

Ruth realized Koutarou's intentions and focused the barrier around the Blue Knight's arms before he could say anything. The carrier was heavy, and whether the Blue Knight could properly catch it or not was difficult to say.

The Blue Knight caught the carrier, and the impact transmitted across the entire ship, causing the bridge to shake. It even surpassed the tolerance of the gravity and inertia control protecting the bridge.

“Kyaaa?!”

The girls instinctively let out cries as the ship suddenly shook. At the same time, many warnings filled the bridge. The monitor was full of damage reports, with red and yellow lights rapidly blinking inside the bridge.

“Nuuuuuooooooo!”

Paying close attention, Koutarou used his full force in an attempt to push back the carrier. If he made even a slight mistake, the carrier would slam into the Blue Knight and something irreparable would happen. Catching the carrier from the front, and in the worst case, falling straight backwards, was the only method of surviving this situation.

Pieces of the carrier that had been broken off by Theia's bombardment crashed into the Blue Knight, and while that wasn’t enough to destroy the ship, it certainly wasn't looking good. Koutarou chased those crashing sounds out of his mind and focused on controlling the ship. That was more important than anything else right now.

That was when the monitor in the front of the bridge was sent flying into several pieces. In place, a large hole of several meters opened, revealing the black space behind it. The next moment, the air in the bridge began being rapidly sucked out.

While the crew protection systems prevented Koutarou and the others from being sucked out as well or being unable to breathe, the air was sucked out in an instant. Once the flow of air stopped, a giant silhouette appeared on the other side of the hole.

“Surely you can't move in a situation like this! I win, Koutarou-kun!”

Elexis appeared while controlling the giant mobile weapon, Warlord. Using this reserve Warlord that he had been storing in the carrier, he was going to make one final attack.

Elexis had planned everything out to create this one moment. He evacuated his troops and rammed the Blue Knight with the carrier. While the carrier might get caught, the Blue Knight would be unable to move if it did. Which of course meant that Koutarou who was controlling the Blue Knight couldn't move either. All he had to do then was to conceal himself amongst the

debris of the carrier and assault the bridge with Warlord. This was his one chance of victory that Elexis had found, and he bet everything on this one moment.

“Farewell, Koutarou-kun! You were really strong!”

Rejoiced that his big bet had paid off, Elexis pointed his beam shotgun at Koutarou.

“Kuh.”

Meanwhile, Koutarou still couldn't move. If he stopped controlling the Blue Knight now, the ships would collide and suffer serious damage. Of course, the crew wouldn't be fine by that either. That said, if he didn't move, he'd be shot. Either way, there was nothing Koutarou could do.

“I won't let you!”

That was when a small silhouette stood in front of Koutarou. It was the small and delicate girl Theia, with her golden hair and blue eyes.

“I won't let you kill my knight!”

“What?!”

Theia stood in front of Koutarou, with her arms spread open, placing herself between Koutarou and the beam shotgun. There was no plan. Theia was simply using her small body to protect Koutarou.

“You idiot! Do you know what you're doing?!”

Koutarou threw criticism towards her back. A princess was putting herself in peril for the sake of a knight. That was an unforgivable act for a royalty that had a duty towards her country and citizens.

“I don't! But, I have to do this! Even if I were to be a failure as a princess, you alone are special! I will protect you even if I have to put myself in danger!”

Theia was crying. She knew in her mind that she shouldn't do this. However, despite that, she couldn't sit still. Her body moved on its own. Her mind and body knew that she needed Koutarou as much as she needed to breathe.

“…Koutarou, so you are beloved by her highness…”

Theia's actions came as unexpected to Elexis as well. He hesitated for a moment, pondering what to do. Should he shoot the both of them or capture Theia. He spent a few seconds considering his options, yet those few seconds change the outcome.

“Gather, spirits of water! Dance, spirits of wind! Combine these two powers and appear, spirits of ice! Oh soaring high iceberg, close it off with your ever-expanding glacier! Ice Coffin!”

All of a sudden, Warlord's left arm was covered in a block of ice and lost its functions. This included the beam shotgun built into the arm. This was an offensive spell from Harumi who didn't miss her window.

“What?!”

“Blue Knight! Anti-material machine canon!”

While Elexis was surprised by the sudden development, Ruth who was sitting on the operator seat directly inputted a command to the Blue Knight and summoned a weapon into the bridge. Since an energy weapon would require time to charge up, she chose a large caliber weapon capable of rapid fire.

“Fire right away using automatic aim!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

Since they were in a vacuum, the sound of the machine cannon firing didn't reach anyone. Only the faint sound of the cartridges dropping onto the floor were transmitted to the people around it. However, the power of the canon was far from faint.

“Uooooooooo!”

With its barrier shattered, and having taken several hits, the Warlord was unable to hang onto the hole it had created itself and was pushed back out into space.

“…You… you tried to kill our precious Koutarou…”

Last was Theia. Theia muttered in a trembling voice as she glared at Warlord flying backwards through the hole on the bridge. Her eyes were burning with rage.

“I won't forgive you… Even if God were to forgive you, I never will! Elexis, you've tried to do something you should never have, may you regret this for the rest of your life!”

As the Warlord was using various boosters and thrusters to straighten itself up, a long line of light chased after it. The light pierced through Warlord and ended the long drawn out battle.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 14

As the carrier was destroyed, the battleship that had lost its weapon warped away. After seeing them off, Clan let out a heavy sigh and leaned back on her seat. Silence returned to the Hazy Moon's bridge, and her sigh could be heard anywhere on the bridge.

“…Geez, what a terrible risk to take…”

While the end result was a victory, the battle was nothing but crises from start to finish. Clan had been compelled to go help the others several times. Fortunately, nothing had gotten far too serious, so she hadn't been needed to provide backup, but Clan couldn't help but feel stressed as she watched the battle. To Clan, she would have felt a lot better if she had been with the others and fought alongside them.

“…Since you'll eventually become my vassal, you have to win more elegantly and overwhelmingly…”

Clan felt like giving Koutarou a few mean remarks out of spite for making her worry so much. So she contacted Koutarou using a direct line.

“Hm? Clan? What's wrong?”

Koutarou appeared on the monitor up front.

“I don't want to hear what's wrong!”

Seeing Koutarou safe and sound, Clan was overcome with an even more intense sense of relief. He looked tired and had dirt all over his face, but he didn't seem to have any serious injuries, and there was power behind his voice. The sense of relief from being able to see the normal Koutarou like this again was anything but small. It was difficult for even Clan herself to figure out if she wanted to confirm that Koutarou was alright or if she wanted to complain.

“Please win in a more elegant fashion next time. I felt like I was the one who was going to die as I watched you.”

“Sorry. I'll try that next time.”

“As long as you understand. Fufu, good work, Bertorion.”

“What, you're awfully kind to—”

Bertorion.

The moment Clan spoke that name, loud roars of joy filled the bridge that had fallen silent.

“W-What?!”

Surprised by the sudden shouts of joy, Clan almost slipped off her seat. She hurriedly grabbed a hold of the armrest of her chair and turned towards the direction of the voices.There she saw men and women of all ages gathered. It wasn't until she saw them that Clan remembered the civilians who had been on the bridge with her, worrying for Theia and Elfaria.

“See! Even princess Clan said Bertorion! It really is the real one!”

“That's right! Seeing how he fought, there's no doubt about it!”

“If not, it wouldn't be possible!”

“To think he could turn the tables in such a situation!”

“Then is that sword really Signaltin?!”

“Alaia's crest was engraved in it! It has to be!”

“It seems like even Alaia-sama is with him!”

The Second Coming of the Legend

The civilians who had been with her had begun to think of Koutarou as the Blue Knight. It was only obvious for them to want to believe that was the case. A princess and the empress were chased out of their country by a coup d'état, and a knight in blue armor had saved them. Not only that, but he had overturned an overwhelming disadvantage and achieved a brilliant victory. On top of that, the items of legend appeared one after another. There was of course the blue armor, and then there was the knight's sword imbued with mysterious powers, and a silver haired girl who controlled those powers. Then there was the red-scaled dragon. Seeing those evidences and Koutarou and the others' victory, the civilians began wondering if it was really him. That was when their highly esteemed princess, Clan, had addressed the knight in question as Bertorion.

If princess Clan was calling him that, then there were no doubts about it. They were convinced that the knight, the legendary Blue Knight, Reios Fatra Bertorion, had appeared in history once more.

The bridge was filled with cheers for the Blue Knight. Their voices were so loud that even Koutarou who was on the other side of the communications device jumped back a little.

"W-What? What happened?"

Clan couldn't understand why the civilians had suddenly started to break out into cheers. Their cheers were so many that it was no longer possible to make out anything of what they were saying.

"Clan! What is with this ruckus?!"

"I don't really know either! They seem to be rejoicing over something!"

Koutarou and Clan's conversation naturally became louder as well so that their voices wouldn't be drowned out.

"We can't talk when it's this noisy! We'll have to talk later!"

Realizing that it would only be troublesome to continue talking like this, Koutarou decided to put their conversation on hold for later. Since they had come out of the battle in one piece, there was no need to try and continue talking in that kind of situation.

"You're right! Let's talk later!"

Of course, Clan had no objections. However, Clan would regret ending their communication a few seconds later.

The civilians grew even louder.

"E-Eh? What is going on?!"

That's because once she ended her conversation with Koutarou, the civilians swarmed her, full of questions.

The Second Coming of the Legend

Part 15

A few hours after the battle had ended, Elexis was staring up at Earth's sky all alone from a coast near Kitsushouharukaze city. The night sky was getting brighter as the sun's light began peeking out from the horizon.

“Phew, I've completely lost… To think I couldn't win even after going so far. It's actually rather refreshing…”

While the Warlord had been lost to Theia's attack, Elexis had somehow managed to escape using the built in ejector seat and made it back to Earth. He had suffered a disastrous defeat, lost contact with his allies and was now all alone on Earth. Others would have seen it as a serious situation, but Elexis was satisfied. That was because he realized that even though he had given it his all, he hadn't stood a chance.

“I didn't lose because Koutarou-kun was strong. It was because I am alone. In that last battle, I had let go of my allies. That is the reason.”

While the past couldn't be changed, if Elexis had fought alongside his allies, he might have come out victorious. However, he had chosen not to. In fact, he might have made light of their power in his urge to protect them. Arrogance or distrust was the reason for his defeat.

Despite having fought to achieve his ideal form of society, he had fallen after giving it his all, on top of that the reason for it was clear. And yet, he couldn't complain even in the slightest. There was nothing left for Elexis to do. He was satisfied with this result.

“…Then how about you come with me?”

That was when someone called out to Elexis from behind. It was the voice of a young woman. One might have been able to call her a girl, but her voice carried composure and gave off the atmosphere of a mature woman.

“And who might you be?”

Elexis continued staring out into the ocean while asking for the name of the woman behind him. The sight of the sun rising in front of Elexis was very beautiful.

“I am Maya. Just like you, I fought against that boy alone and lost.”

Thus, Elexis and Maya met.

As You Wish

Part 1

May 22, Saturday

Several days had passed since the battle, and Koutarou and the girls had returned to their everyday lives. Theia and Elfaria who had escaped the country were now staying on Earth. The situation on Forthorthe progressed exactly like Elexis had predicted, and there was now a temporary lull in the coup d'état. Theia and Elfaria remained in contact with the Elfaria faction left behind on Forthorthe and were now in the progress of gathering information and making preparations to retake the country. As a result, they couldn't make any moves at the moment either.

As the commotion began settling down, Koutarou called Theia up to the Harukaze high school's rooftop. The purpose was to reveal what he had been hiding from Theia up until now.

Even though the battle had ended, Theia hadn't asked Koutarou anything. She patiently waited for Koutarou to tell her. He couldn't find it in him to betray her trust. On top of that, Theia had staked her life to protect him. He felt a need to repay her for that. With that in his mind, Koutarou had decided to reveal everything to Theia.

“The weather is great today…”

The summer season was ever approaching and the sky had a vivid blue color. The clouds floating where dense and had clearly defined shapes. Koutarou leaned against the handrail on the roof and blankly stared up at the sky. He could hear the sounds of birds and cars driving off in the distance. It was a calm summer afternoon, and Koutarou began losing his perception of time.

“Haa, Haa, Haa…”

Koutarou could hear the sound of someone's ragged breath. It seemed as if they had run up there to the point where the tone of the breath became lower than normal. That's right, Koutarou could tell who that breathing belonged to just by hearing it. It was someone he had a very deep relationship with.

“Phew…”

After that person had caught their breath, they stood next to Koutarou, and just like Koutarou they leaned onto the handrail and looked up into the sky. Since that person was short, their hair, which only reached up to about Koutarou's shoulder, fluttered in the wind. The hair shone in a beautiful golden color, as if it contained the very light of the sun.

“…”

“…”

The two wordlessly stood there as the wind blew. Since it was summer time, the wind felt cool and comfortable. The fluttering golden hair fell into disorder and shone brilliantly from the reflected sunshine. As the person contained their disordered hair, it looked like a scene from a movie, and Koutarou stared at the person until the wind slowly died down.

“…Hey, Theia.”

The beautiful golden hair belonged to Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe. The girl that Koutarou had called up to the roof so he could talk to her. She had answered his call and turned her head to look at him. With her facial features, clear blue eyes and golden hair she looked like an angel that had descended to the surface.

“Can you believe everything that I am about to tell you?”

As You Wish

“Why would you ask something like that?”

“Because I'm about to tell you something nobody would normally believe.”

“Is our relationship normal?”

“I'd say it's not.”

“Then you can tell me without worrying. If you were serious and told me that the sun would rise from the west tomorrow, I would believe you.”

“Thank you, Theia…”

When Koutarou thanked Theia he stopped leaning on the handrail and turned towards her. Theia responded by doing the same. Like that, the two faced each other at a distance so close they could reach out to one another.

“Now then, where should I start…”

“Start from the beginning. There's no need to rush.”

“I see. You're right.”

There was so much Koutarou wanted to talk about. So the best way to tell Theia without causing confusion was to start from the beginning. Koutarou thought back of what caused complex situation he was now in. That was an event about half a year ago.

“Theia, do you remember when I and Clan went missing?”

“Yes. There's no way I'd forget. That was when I realized that I love you.”

Theia blushed slightly and narrowed her eyes. Looking at her cute expression, Koutarou almost forgot what he was talking about. However, now was the time for explanation, so he held back his beating heart and continued.

“The problem was our destination at the time.”

“You said you went to a different world.”

“Yeah. It was a somewhat troublesome destination, but I left it at that.”

“Then where did you go?”

That was when Theia's expression turned cloudy. Koutarou's sword, his strange back and forth with Elfaria, the various programs built into the Blue Knight beforehand. With those things in her mind, Theia felt a vague anxiety.

“…To Forthorthe, 2,000 years in the past. And there… I met the Silver Princess.”

“H-How could…”

Theia's eyes opened as wide as they possibly could.

What Koutarou had said far exceeded her imagination. Theia had simply suspected that Koutarou might have travelled to the past. However, 2,000 years ago, and having met the Silver Princess was far outside of her realm of assumed possibilities.

Hearing that, Theia reached a certain guess. However, that was something she had wished for in the past, and she would be troubled if Koutarou spoke of it now.

“I got in the way of the Silver Princess's and the Blue Knight's meeting. That's why I had to take the place of the Blue Knight.”

Koutarou's explanation confirmed Theia's guess.

“Koutarou, wait!”

As You Wish

Theia interrupted Koutarou with a pale face. She then pressed onto Koutarou at a pace so rapid she might bite her own tongue. To Theia, something that must never happen was about to occur.

“If what you're saying is true then, the legend of the Blue Knight in Forthorthe is all about you?!”

“That's right. We couldn't find the real Blue Knight until the very end, so I had to see it through to the end. If I didn't, history would change and we wouldn't be able to come back here.”

“Do you know what that means?!”

With her eyes full of tears, Theia grabbed onto the cloth of Koutarou's chest. The white shirt was squeezed between Theia's fingers. That was just how deep Theia's sadness was.

“That means that you are the real Blue Knight!”

“I'm just a substitute.”

“No! You don't understand a thing!”

Theia shed tears as she shook her head. Her tears scattered and her long hair was disheveled. Both were lit up by the sun and sparkled.

“How could just a substitute get so close to that Silver Princess?! Why would she entrust a substitute with Signaltin, a sword that controlled the fate of the country?! There was no other Blue Knight from the very beginning!”

Koutarou had called himself a substitute, but Theia who was more knowledgeable of the legend than Koutarou knew that there was no one else from the start. The Blue Knight's mysterious appearance. The reason why he had to leave. His magical armor and weapons. And so many other things. It all made sense if one assumed that the Blue Knight had come from a different age.

“Think back to it! Did you save the Silver Princess because you were just a substitute?! That wasn't it, was it?! Since she knew that, she loved you! She isn't naive enough to be fooled by your acting!”

And the best evidence of all was the Silver Princess's, Alaia's, feelings for him. There was no way that legendary princess would fall in love with an act. Alaia had fallen in love with the Blue Knight, with Koutarou, because he had desperately protected Alaia and the others until the end.

“She is the same as me! She fell in love with you because of who you are! That was why she entrusted you with Signaltin! You are without a doubt the Blue Knight!”

Theia loved Koutarou as well. She had also entrusted him with a sword. She was painfully aware of how Alaia must have felt. There was no substitute for Koutarou anywhere in this universe.

“I am… the real…?”

“That's right! You are! You are the blue… the Blue Knight…”

Theia's words began turning into sobs. Unable to continue her answer, she sunk down on the spot and placed her hands on the floor of the rooftop, and let out a cry.

“Uuaaaaaahhh, waaaah, aaaaaahhhh!”

Her cry was filled with a deep sadness.

“Theia… why are you crying?”

Theia's reaction came as a surprise to Koutarou. He had believed she would get disappointed or angry. He hadn't expected her to cry out like this.

“Because… because, you are the Blue Knight!”

As You Wish

Theia began clenching her hands, scratching the concrete floor. Her tears fell down from her cheeks. Theia's voice had such deep sadness to it.

“The Blue Knight is the Silver Princess's knight! Someone like me doesn't stand a chance against her! You wouldn't love me! You only became my vassal because of your loyalty to the Silver Princess, right?!”

To Theia, Koutarou was no longer just a normal knight that could be found anywhere. Theia wanted her bond with Koutarou to be simple, with just a simple meeting, and to slowly strengthen their bond with one another.

Yet now she understood that Koutarou was the Blue Knight. The Blue Knight had complete loyalty towards the Silver Princess, and protected the royal families even now. That meant what was between Theia and Koutarou was the same thing as what was between the Silver Princess and the Blue Knight.

Theia didn't believe she herself was a princess that surpassed the Silver Princess. That's why she believed that Koutarou was protecting her out of his loyalty for the Silver Princess, rather than his loyalty for her. That's why admitting that Koutarou was the Blue Knight was the same as admitting that Koutarou was someone out of Theia's reach.

“Theia…”

“Why, why are you the Blue Knight?! I could never be a match for the Silver Princess! Not a selfish and immature woman as myself… Uuaaaaaaaahh!”

Theia broke down crying, and her already small body shrunk. Her cries rang out, her tears fell on the concrete floor and an intense sob shook her body.

“Theia.”

Koutarou squatted down next to Theia and gently touched her shoulder.

“I don't need any sympathy! I… I loved you! Not the Blue Knight, but you! Yet… yet…”

Theia shook Koutarou's hand off and continued to cry. In the past, she had desired to obtain the Blue Knight, but now, he had appeared when she least wanted him to. What Theia wanted now wasn't the Blue Knight. She wanted Koutarou, who she had always been with. To Theia, this was a horrible twist of fate.

“Theia, listen. You misunderstand.”

Having understood what Theia is grieving about, Koutarou called out to her in an attempt to clear up her misunderstanding. This misunderstanding had to be cleared up no matter what.

“I don't want to listen! I don't need you to comfort me! No matter how much you try to gloss it over, you are the Blue Knight!”

However, Theia didn't want to listen. Her rival was the Silver Princess. Once she learned that, she was taken back by an unmeasurably large shock and her heart closed. But that troubled Koutarou, that's why desperately spoke of how he really felt.

“Think about it, Theia. I came back. To this age where you are. If everything was like you said it was, why would I be here? Wouldn't I stay by her majesty Alaia's side?”

The moment she heard those words, Theia's body froze and at the same time her crying stopped. It was just like Koutarou said. If he truly loved Alaia, there would be no reason for him to come back to Earth. He could have just hid where he came from and stayed there. Yet, Koutarou had returned.

As You Wish

“Her majesty did ask me to stay on Forthorthe, and serve the royal family of Forthorthe. But I declined her offer.”

Theia pushed her hands on the floor and raised her body. She then slowly looked up and stared at Koutarou. Her face was a mess, wet by tears.

“…Why? Why did you come back?”

Theia asked Koutarou. A faint hope and anxiety rested within her eyes. Koutarou reached out with his hand to wipe off the tears from her face and smiled.

“Because I made a promise with you guys.”

“Promise… what are you talking about?”

Theia tried to recall what promise Koutarou was talking about and blinked repeatedly. As she did, the tears that should have been wiped off started streaming down her cheeks again.

“It was at Christmas. We all made a promise back then, right?”

Koutarou showed an embarrassed smile as he spoke the contents of the promise.

“We all promised to make the play a success.”

“That promise… You so earnestly protected a promise like that…”

The promise exchanged at Christmas, and the bonds cultivated up until then was what made Koutarou return to Earth. The Silver Princess had indeed been a wonderful person. She was someone Koutarou wanted to be of help to, someone he wouldn't mind serving. However, even then, Koutarou hadn't forgotten about the promise and bonds back on Earth. That's why he declined the Silver Princess's offer and returned.

That might have been the first case of Koutarou, who kept others at a distance, actually desiring others.

“Oh and also, you said that I was her majesty Alaia's knight, but you're wrong.”

“How could that be! You're the Blue Knight, right?!”

“I was acting like a knight despite not having a title. That's why I was never formally her knight.”

“Then…”

“That's right. There is only one person in this world who has made me her knight.”

Koutarou stared directly at Theia and spoke the name of his lord.

“Theia, you are my only princess.”

“K-Koutarou…”

The tears that had stopped began overflowing again. However, those weren't tears of sadness, but tears of joy.

“Don't cry.”

“I'm not crying! I'm laughing! At your stupidity that is!”

“Stupidity?”

“That’s right, stupidity! She was the Silver Princess you know?! The legendary princess and empress! You declined her offer and came back here! How could you be considered anything but stupid?!”

As You Wish

Still crying, Theia began pounding on Koutarou's chest. The force behind her fists was weak, but the emotions were powerful. Koutarou felt Theia's earnest and warm emotions pouring into him for each time she hit him.

“Don't call me stupid all the time. I might start believing I really am.”

“You are stupid! You chose us over that legendary person! On top of it all, you chose to swear loyalty to such a flat chested and selfish woman!”

Koutarou had chosen his own life over the life of the Blue Knight. That's why he returned and swore loyalty to Theia. Theia herself was unbelievably happy by that, as if her very existence had been affirmed.

“A traditional knight of Forthorthe protects his oath and promise. Isn't that a perfect match for a retroactive princess like you?”

“Stupid, idiot, you big idiot!”

Unable to contain her emotions, Theia embraced Koutarou and began crying even harder. She hung her arms around Koutarou's neck and pressed her cheek against his chest.

Theia needs me this much…

Koutarou gently hugged Theia back. He wanted to let her know that he needed her too.

“You might call it stupid, but I'm glad I came back.”

Theia's small body fit perfectly in Koutarou's arm, which he was happy about.

“Because I can protect you with my own hands… It's best to keep those precious to you close, and protect them yourself.”

As he hugged her, he felt like he was protecting Theia. That he was protecting someone who had put her life on the line to protect him. That sensation gave Koutarou joy.

“Then protect me… Take responsibility and do so until the very end…”

Theia muttered and closed her eyes. She had found someone she could entrust not just her body to, but her mind as well. Theia was in bliss having been able to emotionally connect with him.

“And… only once you have seen us all live a happy life to its fullest, may you die…”

Being hugged by Koutarou, Theia could clearly feel that the place she belonged was here. Just like Theia and the others needed Koutarou, Koutarou needed them.Those feelings and bonds were surely stronger than fate itself.

“…As you wish, my princess.”

“Mm… very good…”

That's why Theia could believe, that even if further hardships awaited her in the future, Koutarou and the girls of room 106 would have happy lives.

Part 2

For a teenager like Shizuka, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that maintaining her beauty was her top priority. Thanks to her doing martial arts, her figure was not a problem. However, she was aware that she had let her guard down and ate a little too much since the battle a few days ago. The reason she felt that way was because when she would walk on the floor in her room, it would often creak. That's why she began worrying that she might be getting fatter in parts of her body unrelated to her figure.

So immediately after getting out of the shower, Shizuka pulled out a scale from her wardrobe. The only chance she had to weigh herself was when her roommate, Maki, was taking her shower.

“…Alright.”

After making up her mind, Shizuka timidly put a foot on the scale.

The scale that she had been using for over ten years was an analogue scale, a rare sight these days. Shizuka's best weight was 46 kilos. Compared to her classmates around her height, that was slightly heavy, but that was because she had more muscles than normal because of her martial arts. Now that she had eaten too much, Shizuka was prepared to see a figure of around 48 kilos.

“Huh?”

But as Shizuka put both of her feet on the scale, the needle took off, accompanied by a dull sound. The scale went up to 200 kilos, but the needle pointed past that.

“Oh, it's broken… I'll have to get a new one… Ahh~, another extra expense…”

Shizuka figured that the scale must be broken and dropped her shoulders. Over 200 kilos was impossible after all.

However, Shizuka didn't know.

Inside of her lived a dragon over 25 meters in height, and that her weight was nowhere even near 200 kilos.

Afterword

Long time no see everybody, it's the author, Takehaya.

This time I deliver you volume 13. A story regarding Theia's homeland of Forthorthe takes place. On top of that, the secret as to why that person is so strong is revealed.

Thanks to everyone's support, I have been able to release 15 volumes of this series. Could this be the longest series with HJ Bunko?[1] When I imagine 15 volumes lined up on everyone's bookshelf, I feel moved and feel the urge to live up to your expectations. I hope to continue writing volumes that won't let down my fans.

As of late, I've been getting fan letters through the mail more often. There was even someone who sent me some snacks. Thank you very much everyone. In some of the letters were some questions for me, so I would like to borrow this space to answer some.

First off is “Do you do something when you're thinking about the composition of the story?” While I memo down things I come up with, I think the most important thing before writing a volume is to think about how I want the series as a whole to end. Starting writing before everything is set could cause problems later on. For example, I can't have the main character treasure life if I have him killing a bunch of enemies. In order to do that, I need to make the main character avoid wanting to take lives, or make it seem like a difficult choice beforehand. Stuff like that can happen with anything, so I believe it's a good thing to be careful.

Next is “Are there any tricks to naming a character?” When naming a character, I first try to make sure that names are not too similar. When publishing multiple works, it's important that names don't clash there either. In fact, I had trouble making sure that the names of a work I published the other day, 'Kaze to Lute no Shirabe ni Nosete,' didn't clash. The other thing is to make sure that is easy to read. A complex name would distract the reader. A simple example is my pen name, Takehaya. This is a trick to make those I deal business with to remember my name, but in a work, if a reader can't distinguish a name then that will derail the story. That's why I believe it is wise to avoid using complex names.

Lastly is “Can you be an author while doing something else?” Apart from the rare debut work being a major success, most authors start out while having a different job. A newly debuted author can't live on their writing alone. It's not until they become popular that they can gradually shift to writing more and more.

That is all the space I have for this afterword. I would like to give my thanks to Poco-san for drawing the cute illustrations, to everyone in the editorial department for their hard work and too everyone who bought this book.

Then, let us meet again in the afterword for volume 14.

March, 2013 Takehaya

[1] The publishing label for Rokujouma no Shinryakusha!?

Corona Convention

NEW! 2010/6/7

Article 17

Should Kasagi Shizuka (Inhabitant of Corona House Room 206) see a large problem with an inhabitant of Room 106's health, she may set a week of health management.

Article 17 Postscript

Dieting alone is hard! I thought you could help me! Please, everyone!